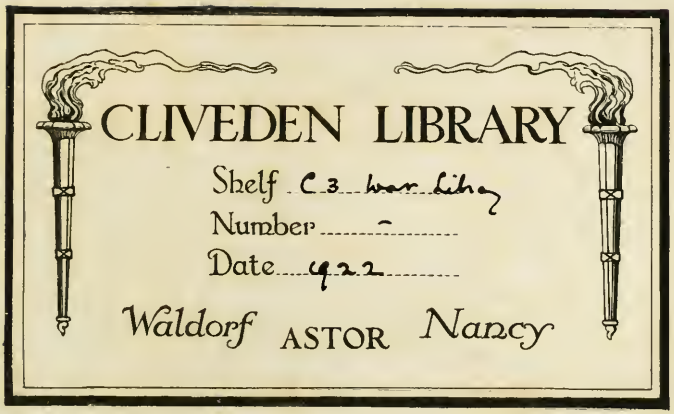
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FROM THE SOMME TO THE RHINE

FROM THE SOMME TO THE RHINE

By S. ASHMEAD-BARTLETT WITH MAPS

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LIST OF MAPS

FROM THE SOMME TO THE RHINE

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9th August, 1918.

At last I have got back to France. As a result of my labours at the Staff School, I have returned as a regimental officer on staff probation, which means that I shall have to undergo periods of attachment to various units in the field before receiving an appointment.

We crossed from Folkestone to Boulogne in the s.s. *Victoria*, one of a convoy of three fast Channel steamers. On our port bow were a destroyer and a large motor patrol boat, on our starboard side a second destroyer ; several s.s. airships flew overhead, and as the sea was calm and the weather fine the crossing was most enjoyable.

The military landing officer at Boulogne told me that I was posted to the 58th (London) Division, and should get further orders from the commandant of St. Martin's Camp in the morning. This is a pleasant surprise because my brother Percy is Brigade Major of the 175th Brigade in the 58th Division.

Boulogne is picturesque but squalid, for though so highly civilized in their thoughts

and manners the French do not seem to care about sanitation. At present the foreign element predominates in the streets, where English, Scotch, Canadians, Australians, Americans, Portuguese, Kaffirs, and German prisoners under escort are to be seen.

11th August.

Left for Canaples, near Amiens, at 8 a.m. As the train only averaged about eight miles an hour, we were eleven hours on the road, and did not reach our destination until seven p.m. It was intolerably hot in the carriage so we took it in turn to sit on the footboards. At Anvin during an hour's halt I managed to procure a tin of salmon and a bottle of lime juice from a Y.M.C.A. hut.

At Canaples, my companion, a fine old quartermaster, in the East Surreys, and I billeted ourselves very comfortably in a farm, and in the morning Madame gave us some excellent coffee and eggs, which we ate in the kitchen. I have never seen so many flies in my life, the table, walls and food swarming with them. They are bred in the horrible middens which all these French farms have in their yards, and the inhabitants appear indifferent to this pest.

13th August.

After much "lorry jumping" I reached the 58th Divisional reception camp at Mirvaux about 2.30 p.m., where I found that T. of the

Bedfordshire Regiment, an old friend of my family, was Adjutant. Having been shot down in an aeroplane from a height of 15,000 feet, he is no longer fit for more active employment. Here I learned that the division, having just taken part in the very successful offensive of the 8th of August, was to be withdrawn into corps reserve. Later the D.A.A.G. to whom I spoke on the telephone told me that I might go and spend a night with my brother at the Headquarters of the 175th Infantry Brigade before joining the 173rd Infantry Brigade, to which I had been posted.

14th August.

After an early lunch I set out to walk to Fréchencourt, where I had been told I should find the 175th Infantry Brigade Headquarters, but on arrival found that they had not yet got back from the line. Percy turned up about 6 p.m., looking very fresh and well despite the strain of the past few days, and told me all about the fight. The 58th Division captured all its objectives, along with about 2,000 prisoners and 70 guns, and he assures me that he saw a great many German dead on the ground over which his brigade advanced.

The victory which the British have gained north and south of the Somme is entirely due to the moral superiority of our men, because, as we have never been able to make good the losses we suffered in the Spring re-

treat, this blow has been dealt, not by those fabulous reserves of which the newspapers talk, but by those same brave fellows who stopped the German advance in the Spring and have been in the line ever since.

There are only about a dozen inhabitants left in Fréchencourt, but I suppose more will return now that the Boche is being driven back. The unfortunate people will have only the husks of their homes to return to, for all the furniture and fittings have been removed for use in dug-outs, or for firewood, and as the villages in this part of the Somme valley are very badly built—of timber and plaster, for the most part—a single bomb generally shakes a great number of houses to pieces. What peasants remain are performing prodigies of labour in harvesting the corn, most of which will never be gathered. Every inch of soil is cultivated, but the methods and appliances are most antiquated. Up to the spring of the year, this part of the country was 40 or 50 miles behind the front line and the inhabitants lived undisturbed by war, but when the Boche swept forward in his great offensive they suddenly found themselves in the battle zone, and had to abandon their homes and all that they had worked so hard for.

In 1912 when I saw the Turkish inhabitants streaming across Thrace to escape from the Bulgarians, I little thought that within a few years I should see this scene re-enacted

in Western Europe, among people whom one had come to regard as immune from war.

21st August.

I joined the Headquarters of the 173rd Infantry Brigade at the Château de Querrieu on the afternoon of the 14th, riding over there from Fréchencourt with my brother. S—— of the Bedfordshire Regiment is brigade major—an old friend and the best of good fellows—and the Brigade Commander, General C— of the Grenadier Guards, is the most courteous of gentlemen, who addresses every one, irrespective of rank, as "My dear old boy."

The château is a large, rectangular, box-like structure, almost devoid of furniture, standing in a fine park with a lake in which we have had many refreshing bathes, for the weather is the hottest that I have experienced outside semi-tropical countries, and this chalky Somme country is covered with a white mantle of dust. The château belongs, or rather belonged, to a lady with the Gilbertian name of the Duchess of Alcantara, and was the Headquarters of the 4th Army for over a year prior to the German offensive in the Spring.

We spent a very pleasant week training the new drafts which have arrived to replace the losses in the battle on the 8th. One afternoon the divisional concert party, known as the "Goods," gave a performance in the grounds of the château. The comic-man, a

London comedian, earning forty pounds a week before the war, made us laugh heartily. There were two good singers, and a man disguised as a woman so excellently that it was hard to tell he did not belong to the fair sex. On another occasion the band of the 2nd Life Guards performed in the park, and on Sunday the army commander attended church parade, after which the brigade marched past to the tune of the "British Grenadiers." Save for enemy aeroplanes, which rendered the night hideous, there was little to remind us of war. Most of our men are very young, and do not look sufficiently mature to stand the strain of war. Europe has been bled white; and, since modern warfare means not the survival of the fittest but of the unfittest, it will be years before she recovers. This evening we have received orders to move forward to-morrow morning at 5.30 a.m.; the three Battalions with "A" Company 58th Machine Gun Battalion to the woods south of Mericourt L'Abbaye, a little village on the Ancre, and our Headquarters to the Halte on the Railway South of Heilly. I suppose this means another attack. The composition of the 58th Division is as follows:—

173rd Infantry Brigade: 2/2nd Battalion London Regt., 3rd Battalion London Regt., 2/4th Battalion London Regt.

174th Infantry Brigade: 2/6th Battalion London Regt., 2/7th London Regt., 2/8th Battalion London Regt.

175th Infantry Brigade: 2/9th Battalion London Regt., 2/10th Battalion London Regt., 2/12th Battalion London Regt.

The division has had a career of unbroken distinction since its arrival in France at the end of 1916, and is classified by the Germans as a first class "Assault Division."

22nd August.

We left Querrieu at 5 a.m. It was a lovely warm morning with a full moon shining in a clear sky, and as the sun came over the horizon a tremendous bombardment opened in the north, where two divisions on our left were attacking in front of Albert to capture the high ground round Fricourt.

Heilly has been badly knocked about by shell-fire, but is now quiet. We established our Headquarters in a little house close to the Halte. Two months ago it was a happy bourgeois home, now though but slightly damaged it has been stripped of all its contents.

Books of the classical variety were scattered about the house and garden. I started to read Alexandre Dumas Junior's "La Dame aux Camélias," but found it hard to arouse any interest in the life of that unfortunate *courtisane*. After lunch the General and I rode up to reconnoitre the front from the high ground north of Morlancourt. To the north was the valley of the Ancre, marked by shattered trees and ruined villages. In

the far distance lay Albert, or rather the distorted ruin which marks the site of that once prosperous little town; in the foreground Bécordel, which our troops captured yesterday, with a few shells still bursting above it. Overhead a flight of our aeroplanes returning from patrol were being heavily "Archied."

The hills round Morlancourt have been literally torn to pieces by shell-fire, and the whole country-side presents a spectacle of terrible desolation.

At 7.30 p.m. we received orders to move forward to assembly positions, east of Morlancourt, as we are to be in close support of the 175th Brigade who are due to attack at 1 a.m. to-morrow. I rode on to establish our Headquarters in a sunken road a mile or so west of Morlancourt. At first the night was fine and a bright moon lighted up the tortured land. I passed through half-ruined Merecourt and ruined Treux. At the latter place a 9.2 howitzer, firing in a wood a hundred yards or so from the road, nearly blew me out of my saddle, but save for an occasional gun the night was quiet. Presently clouds obscured the moon, and for a time I was lost on the shell-pitted plain, until I sighted the shattered trees round Morlancourt standing out like gibbets against the sky.

24th August.

We passed an uncomfortable night because the 175th Infantry Brigade Staff were occupy-

ing the two or three elephant shelters which constituted the whole accommodation in the sunken road. I borrowed a British warm from their intelligence officer and lay out in a field, but sleep was impossible, because of the cold, and the untimely arrival of several shells from high velocity guns. At one a.m. the barrage opened for the attack of the 175th Brigade and a brigade of the division on our left, across the Happy Valley. A magnificent spectacle—the night shattered by a thousand spurts of flame, and the countless reports merging into a vast thunder of sound.

I watched for a time and then creeping into a shelter, where I found just room to stretch myself on the floor, with my box respirator as a pillow, soon fell asleep. We were to have passed through the 175th Brigade and continue the attack at 4 p.m., but the orders were cancelled during the morning so we passed the day quietly in a quarry.

Later we heard that the two other brigades of the division were to attack at dawn on the morrow, and that we were to advance in close support in order to pass through and exploit any gains they might make.

At 9 p.m. I set off with the sergeant-major of the observers and six men to prepare a forward Headquarters in a quarry close to the railway, about 1000 yards west of the Happy Valley. Moonlight walks across the battle-fields of yesterday are gruesome : the ground pitted with shell-holes, full of fœtid water and

worse things stinking of corruption; the sightless eyes of dead men staring at the moon; shattered equipment and broken arms, overturned limbers and dead horses—all the grim signs of death and destruction. We found the 175th Brigade Headquarters and a main Dressing Station already in the Chalk Pit, so in the only unoccupied corner we set about digging shelters in the bank. The General and Brigade-Major arrived about 2.15 a.m., and at 2.30 a.m. the barrage started. We sat about cold and tired until dawn, when a thick wet mist arose to add to our discomfort and the difficulty of conducting operations. At 5 a.m. we received information from the division that our final objective along the Bray Albert Road had been captured, and orders to form an advanced guard and to push on in the direction of Maricourt. Owing to the difficulty of getting orders to Battalions in the mist, and to the difficulties which they in turn experienced in forming up, our leading Battalion did not march off until 9 a.m.

The 4th Battalion London Regiment led the advanced guard in artillery formation. I rode ahead of them across the Happy Valley, which reeked of gas, but when within a thousand yards or so of Billon Wood we came under rifle and artillery fire and the Battalion was forced to deploy. The General and Brigade-Major now came up, and as the road was far from healthy, we dismounted and established ourselves in a ditch just in rear of the 4th

Battalion and ahead of the rest of the brigade —an unusual situation for a brigade staff. Here we remained throughout the day subjected at intervals to heavy shelling with gas, high explosive, and shrapnel. The sun was terrible, and by noon my steel helmet was so hot that I could no longer bear to touch it with my hand. The dust was such as one only meets in the chalky Somme country, and to add to our discomfort we were without food or water.

Our troops encountered strong opposition from Billon Wood, which was not reduced until the 2nd Battalion London Regiment had been put in to encircle it from the north. During the afternoon, and early the next morning, our troops drove back the enemy and established themselves on a line about 2,000 yards from Maricourt. This village, which stands on a high spur at the head of several valleys running down to the Somme, forms an important tactical feature which the enemy is likely to try and hold for a time at least.

At 10 p.m. we moved our Headquarters to some German shelters in a bank at the citadel, where we found our mess limber, and after an impromptu meal settled down for a comfortable night in Boche beds made of boxwood and rabbit wire. On our way to our new Headquarters we were overtaken by a magnificent thunderstorm. Repeated flashes of lightning split the heavens and torrential rain converted the tracks into seas of mud within a few

minutes, but though the men in the trenches were wet to the skin the rain was rather a relief, for it laid the dust and cooled the overheated air.

Our losses in the attack on Billon Wood were heavy, the troops suffering particularly from some field guns firing over open sights from the hedges in Maricourt; it was not till late in the day that our own artillery was in a position to retaliate.

26th August.

A quiet day with a good deal of work preparing for an attack on Maricourt to-morrow morning. Our troops are tired but cheerful.

27th August.

I turned out at 4 a.m. and went forward to Bronfay Farm to establish an advanced report centre. The enemy was shelling the road to the plateau with 5.9 inch shells, and just as I reached the farm a shell landed in the midst of the 4th Battalion signallers, who were marching up the road a hundred yards away. Six men were killed and about twelve wounded. It is a terrible sight to see the mangled remains of men just killed by shell-fire.

At 5 a.m. our barrage came down and the troops began their advance. German prisoners soon commenced to arrive at the advanced report centre. The first man that I spoke to—a funny little officer of timid mien—put up his hands and cried "*Kamerad.*" I interviewed

about 20 prisoners in all, belonging to the 115th, 116th, 117th Infantry Regiments, 117th Division. Most of them were of poor physique and worse *moral*. When they learned that they were to be well-treated, they expressed delight at being captured and offered to do any work that might be required of them.

At 7 a.m. I moved the advanced report centre forward to Plateau Sidings, where we established ourselves in some old elephant shelters erected by the British in 1917, captured and used by the Germans in 1918, and now retaken by us. During the morning, between the intervals of receiving and passing on reports, I collected a good many stragglers. All save one were genuine cases; men who had become separated from their units by shell-fire which had driven them to earth. Poor fellows—all of them were tired, most of them badly shaken. One or two asked to be allowed to remain behind, but war is an inexorable master and demands the ultimate sacrifice from all, so I had to harden my heart.

We had captured Maricourt by noon, but our casualties were again severe, chiefly owing to the fire of the enemy's field guns at close range.

The brigade does not number more than 900 bayonets. We have been fighting for three days and the men are very tired, nevertheless we have to attack again at dawn to-morrow. I am sorry for our poor fellows, but it must be done, for if we can harass the Boche sufficiently

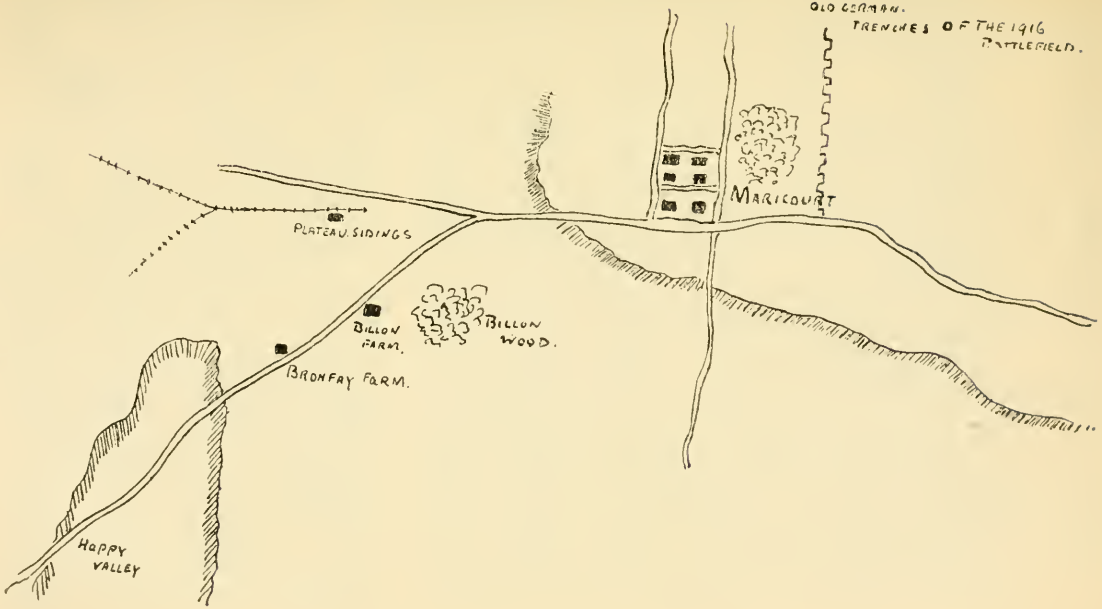
we may be able to inflict a decisive defeat on him this year. His men are as tired as ours, and badly discouraged in addition.

28th August.

We attacked again this morning at 5 a.m. and captured our objective, which was the old German trench system east of Maricourt, as well as the Bois d'en Haut. These were the same trenches which the French captured on July 1st, 1916, when they jumped off from in front of Maricourt on the first day of the tragic battle of the Somme.

The Germans offered little resistance to our attack, but afterwards put down a pretty heavy bombardment on the front line trenches. I am afraid that in this type of rearguard action they inflict heavier casualties upon us than they suffer themselves. On the other hand, they lose prisoners and material and suffer progressive demoralization.

We only took half a dozen prisoners to-day. One of them, belonging to the 201st Infantry Regiment, said that the rest of his company had retreated the previous evening, but that feeling tired and ill he had remained behind to sleep. His captor, a rough-looking Londoner, here chipped in, "That's right, sir; I found him asleep in a trench. He would have been for it, if he 'ad been doing anything else, but I 'adn't the 'eart to kill him as he was a-sleeping." We are to be relieved to-night by the 175th Brigade.



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE CAPTURE OF MARICOURT, AUGUST 1918

29th August.

Got up at 7.30 having had an excellent and much-needed night's rest, and after breakfast rode down to the Somme through Bray to have a bathe. After the first attack on the Happy Valley a week ago, a squadron of the Northumberland Hussars were sent out into the blue to follow the enemy. They never had a chance in this country which, though open, is covered with shell-holes and wire, and when near this road came under machine-gun fire and suffered severe losses. It is still littered with their horses, which smell far from pleasant.

Bray is badly knocked about, but not so badly as I had expected. I turned off along the river valley, across pleasant pastures showing few signs of war, to where the Somme divides into several channels, and using an old pontoon as a bathing stage had a most enjoyable swim.

In the afternoon W. and I rode forward to see if we could find out anything about the enemy, who was reported to be retiring. We passed through Maricourt, yesterday the scene of heavy fighting, to-day crowded with troops and transport. Maricourt, which was reduced to ruins in 1916, must have been a pretty village with abundance of gardens and orchards. There were fewer dead to be seen in it than I had expected. Beyond is the old Somme battle-field, and we had to thread our way through a maze of grass-grown, dilapidated

trenches with tangled rusty wire in front of them, relics of 1916. The Péronne road runs through the midst of the battlefields, bordered by the skeletons of what were once magnificent Lombardy poplars. Now they are stumps stripped of leaves and branches ; even the bark has been blasted from the trunks ; yet from their roots young shoots are springing—a symbol of the future. We were on a high, flat-topped plateau with steep valleys running down to the Somme. The chalky soil is seared and pitted with shell-holes, so numerous that they are practically contiguous. No buildings or vegetation other than rank, unwholesome grass remain, and only a few shattered stumps mark the site of woods. A scene of terrible desolation, this sad Somme country ! The bloodiest battles of the war were fought over it in July-August-September, 1916, before the Germans retired to the Hindenburg line. This spring they returned victoriously across it, and now we are driving them back again. There are crosses with tricolour cockades in abundance bearing inscriptions such as : " Ici repose le soldat Jacques G— mort au champ d'honneur le 10 juillet 1916," for the French were fighting in this part of the Somme battlefield ; mingled with them are many German crosses with the words " Todt auf dem Felde der Ehre " ; and now the British dead of yesterday are gently sleeping on the grass.

We rode about two miles beyond Maricourt to Summit Copse, from which we could see

the enemy's position being shelled north of Clery-sur-Somme and east of Maurepas. While we were watching, the Boche opened fairly heavy artillery fire on Summit Copse, so, as we were fulfilling no useful purpose, we retired. As far as we could make out, the enemy had retreated to the line Clery-sur-Somme-Le Forest.

30th August.

After tea the Brigade-Major, W. and I rode to Albert. As a town it no longer exists, a few walls, shapeless piles of bricks, mortar and timber, and the outline of streets running through the ruins—that is all. Of the church, a large modern building, only the skeleton remains. Huge blocks of masonry, weighing at least 20 tons, have been hurled some distance from the main structure; that they retain cohesion, despite the titanic forces which have played upon them, is a tribute to the strength of the ferro-concrete of which they are composed. Even the dead are denied repose, for the cemetery is wrecked and the graves opened by shells. Albert was more or less intact and still contained inhabitants when the German advance engulfed it this spring. We cannot place its destruction wholly to the German account, because our artillery did most of the damage; but, to judge from the number of heavy shells lying about, the Germans must have had a good many batteries in action in the town, so our fire was

justified. Albert was a little provincial manufacturing town before the war, and even in destruction has preserved something of its bourgeois atmosphere.

About 11 p.m. we heard a number of German bombing machines approaching. It is most unpleasant to lie in a tent and listen to the heavy throbbing buzz which they make. There is something so deliberate and yet so intangible about this form of warfare that in the silent night man feels a puny insect, compared to these monsters of his own creation. The aeroplanes hovered overhead for what seemed a long time, and then made off and dropped their bombs along the Valley of the Ancre.

31st August.

Yesterday morning the Australians captured Mont St. Quentin, north of Péronne, thereby turning the defensive position in front of which the enemy brought our attacks to a stop in 1916. The Germans had meant to stand on this line, but now they will have to go back to the famous Hindenburg system, which the 1st Army has already breached in the north between Remy and Croisilles. During the morning we were told that the Division was to come out of the line for a rest, but this pleasure was not destined to be fulfilled until after many more battles had been fought.

At 2.30 p.m. came a message that we should have to attack at dawn, but it was not until

5.30 p.m., that we received definite orders for the attack. At 7 p.m. the brigade left Bronfray Farm and proceeded by 'bus to Hem Cross Roads; thence the battalions had to march in the dark—for the night was moonless—to positions of assembly on the Péronne-Rancourt road opposite Bouchavesnes, which village, together with the high ground beyond, was to be assaulted at 5.30 a.m. W. and I rode on ahead of the brigade and, leaving our horses at Hem Cross Roads, walked across country in search of our new Headquarters on Hill 101. Night overtook us on the way, and for two hours we wandered about in the dark, under heavy shell-fire, before finding the dug-out in which our telephone had been installed. The two assaulting Battalions formed up on the starting line by zero hour, a very fine piece of work, as they were moving in the dark over unknown country, and at 5.30 a.m. the assault was launched. It met with complete success, our troops going straight to their final objective with comparatively light losses. We captured nearly 300 prisoners, most of whom belonged to the 232nd Division, which lately reinforced this front.

I went up to the front line during the morning. The Péronne Road runs straight along the valley in a northerly direction upon a causeway about 15 feet high. Our troops jumped off from the west side, crossed the causeway and then advanced over steep and broken ground in a north-easterly direction

on to the high ground where once stood Bouchavesnes, overcoming all resistance in an incredibly short time. In the centre of the German position is a mound upon which still stand six machine-guns, sighted to fire diagonally across our line of advance. In front are lying two officers and ten men of the 4th Battalion, London Regiment, who tried to assault it in front, with two Lewis guns. While they died in front, others attacked the redoubt from the rear, and bayoneted those of the German machine gunners who did not surrender.

Major T., commanding the 4th Battalion, London Regiment, took us round the front line. Incidentally he lost his way and took us down the slopes of the valley traversed by the Canal du Nord to a position about 500 yards in front of our outposts. We were made aware of our indiscretion by a German sniper firing from the direction of St. Pierre Vaaste Wood. We jumped into a shell-hole, and after waiting a while, ran one by one, from shell-hole to shell-hole back to our own lines. A 5.9 inch shell nearly got T. as he was doing his last sprint. I was 20 yards from him in a trench when I heard it coming and as I threw myself flat, had a vision of flame, smoke and earth going up into the air where a second before he had been. When the smoke cleared away I saw him lying flat, and for a moment thought he was dead; but, jumping to his feet, he ran into the trench cheerful and unmoved.

The full list of our captures is 325 unwounded prisoners, 8 field guns, many machine-guns and one motor ambulance complete with driver. Not bad for a tired brigade which only numbered a round 900 bayonets when the action begun.

3rd September.

German aeroplanes were very active this evening. One, the first that I have seen over our lines in daylight since our attack started on the 22nd August, dived out of the clouds and attacked one of our observation balloons. It did not hit the balloon, but the two observers, preferring not to await the results of the attack, jumped out with their parachutes. Their descent was very gradual, and a strong west wind carried them at a considerable pace towards the enemy. We never heard on which side of the lines they landed, but one of the unhappy men was swinging violently, and I do not see how he could have come to earth without breaking his legs. During the night enemy bombers were overhead, but luckily for us they again dropped all their bombs in the Ancre Valley.

4th September.

I have been with this brigade three weeks, and a very pleasant time it has been. The General is such a perfect gentleman, courteous and charming to every one. The Brigade-Major, S., is a fine fellow, always calm and cheerful, and just as capable of writing

clear orders under shell-fire at four o'clock in the morning, as after a good night's rest in a comfortable billet. Our Londoners are fine fighters, quick and intelligent, but having been brought up in a town, they are not accustomed to finding their way about the open country by daylight, let alone in the dark. They require a special sort of discipline. Their officers must win their confidence, make friends with, and lead them; a martinet is sure to fail in command of a London Battalion, for a Londoner becomes unhappy if driven, and when unhappy will not fight so well.

To-day we heard that the Canadians are well across the Hindenburg Line east of Arras, and if the Germans cannot hold the Hindenburg Line their retreat will only be limited by our powers of endurance. There are no signs at present of it becoming disorderly, but they have only 15 fresh divisions in reserve; so, if we can continue our pressure for another two months, I do not see how they can hope to resist the force that America will have fit for battle by then.

Our little camp on Hill 101 is now assuming a certain aspect of permanence, but I expect before many days have passed we shall be trekking again. Still in war the correct principle is to assume always that you are going to be at least a month in a place, and to set about making yourself comfortable accordingly. There are, of course, no houses left in this part of the country and most of us

are living in old French dug-outs. W. and I prefer a tent, round which we have built a low wall of earth to protect us from bomb splinters, and the R.E. having built us a wooden hut with a tin roof for a mess we are none too uncomfortable.

Exploring the old trenches of 1916, one comes across many strange and sad mementos of past battles. In grass-grown trenches and shell-holes are rusty French and German steel helmets, or rifles with the bayonets fixed, dropped there two years ago. Close by perhaps a wooden cross wreathed with metal flowers commemorates the spot where their owners lie. Twice has the tide of battle swept over their heads since then, but now at last they have rest; for the storm is dying down and the tide is ebbing eastward never to return.

Then there are later strata: a disembowelled tank lying astride a trench; rusty British rifles and helmets, or British graves, relics of the retreat in the spring. Then the latest strata of all—more rifles and equipment, hardly rusted as yet, broken limbers, steel helmets and the tired dead of yesterday.

After an early tea I rode across to the valley where our troops are encamped, to see a performance of the "Goods"—our divisional concert party. What a lot has happened since their last performance at Querrieu Château a fortnight ago. Many a poor lad who laughed at their quips and gibes then has since been buried by those self-same merry-

makers; for when battles are being fought they exchange their motley for the grave-digger's spade. Unfortunately a thunderstorm put an end to a performance which we were all enjoying exceedingly.

The storm passed away in splendour about seven o'clock; in the east dark clouds crowned with yellow flames; in the west the sun sinking peacefully below the horizon behind fairy islands floating in a sea of pale green and blue.

5th September.

I have seen the abomination of desolation. W. and I rode over to Longueval and Delville Wood to look for the grave of a friend of his who was killed in the retreat. The only news of his end was contained in a letter which his widow received from a German stretcher-bearer, describing the spot where her husband was buried, and deploring the war which made men without enmity kill one another.

Maurepas, Hardecourt-aux-Bois, Guillemont, Longueval, through which we passed, have ceased to exist: the very bricks have been powdered to dust by successive bombardments, and but for notice boards it would be impossible for a returning refugee to distinguish the site of his village, amidst this chaos of shell-holes overgrown with rank grass.

As far as the eye can see, the plateau is a vast cemetery; a wilderness of white crosses and shell-holes filled with foul yellow water, in which swim obscene insects; scattered bones

of men and horses, skeletons with scraps of uniform clinging to them.

There are thousands of these little white crosses dotted indiscriminately about this Golgotha, for men were buried hastily where they fell; some of them are inscribed with the names of those whom they commemorate, but most are to the memory "of an unknown soldier."

Our very horses snorted and grew restive, as if afraid to traverse this land of sorrow, from which, though two years have passed since the battle of the Somme, there still arises a stench of corruption.

Delville Wood, which our troops captured, lost, and captured again, now consists of a few hundred bare tree stumps standing on the lips of shell craters, in which men lay during those terrible bombardments, and prayed for death to put an end to their sufferings.

They did not die in vain, for to-night comes news that we have broken through the Hindenburg Line east of Arras, defeating eleven German divisions massed on a front of 8,000 yards, and capturing over 10,000 prisoners.

To-night also comes news of the Police Strike in London. This is indeed a surprising event. The forming of a union of policemen marks a definite stage in the history of Trade Unions. From the police force to the army is only a step.

Wonderful clouds to-day. Armies of cumulus marching slowly and majestically across the sky. As the day drew in, mountain upon

mountain of white vapour, with black storm clouds at the base, were piled up in the east. Upon the summit was what looked like a figure of Jove, the old Thunderer, hurling destruction upon the earth, from which thick columns of smoke were ascending; for the Germans are burning dumps for miles behind their lines. And then the sunset—a golden glow in the west in which float wisps of mauve-coloured cirrus—the stars shining out in the pale blue vault above, and then white clouds in the east bursting into flame. Silence falling on the troubled hills; a file of troops trailing slowly across the sky line; a bugle in the distance; then Night.

7th September.

The brigade embussed at 7 a.m. at the Hem Cross Roads and proceeded via Bouchavesnes and Moislains to St. Pierre Farm on the Péronne-Nurlu Road. Here the battalions were established in a wood to the west of the road, and in a large quarry shaped like a Roman amphitheatre. I went on ahead at 5 a.m., and met my brother, who told me that the 175th Infantry Brigade had made good progress, getting beyond Saulcourt and Villers-Faucon. They are thus only a few miles from the Hindenburg Line, behind which the main enemy forces are probably reorganizing. I expect the resistance will stiffen now, as he is bound to hold an outpost system in front of his main line.

For lack of a better place, we established our Headquarters in a derelict German pigeon loft, where we spent a hot, uncomfortable and hungry day. About 5 p.m. came news that the 174th Infantry Brigade was to pass through the 12th Division at dawn and attack the villages of Peizière and Epéhy. The brigade will be attacking on a 3,000 yards front and only numbers about 1000 bayonets, so I suppose the idea is to harass the Germans with weak forces here and deliver the knock-out blow somewhere else.

We marched off at 6.30 p.m. to take up assembly positions north of Lieramont, but darkness overtook us before we reached our destination. I fear the men had an uncomfortable night, as they had to lie out in the open, and before dawn it began to rain. We were fortunate enough to find shelter in some old British Nissen Huts in the north-eastern outskirts of Lieramont, which had recently been evacuated by the Boche. He must have left in a hurry, to judge by the litter of papers lying about. After a most welcome meal of bully beef, sausage and tinned apricots, washed down with rum punch—than which nothing is more comforting—I passed an excellent night on the floor, thanks to my Kapok mattress.

8th September.

We are now beyond the zone of the old Somme battles, in a country which is not completely devastated. The villages have

been destroyed, but not obliterated. In many cases the walls are still standing, and this morning I saw a chimney intact, which gave to the village of Lieramont an extraordinarily prosperous appearance. This must have been a rich country in time of peace, and the farms and houses are so well-built that the Boche found difficulty in destroying them when he retreated in the winter of 1916-17. It is not unlike parts of Salisbury Plain, but better wooded ; nor are the trees stripped and blasted like those in the country through which we have passed, but green and gay with foliage. Of cultivation there are no signs, and the pasture is rank and weedy.

The 174th Infantry Brigade did not succeed in capturing Peiziére and Epéhy. These two villages, which stand on high ground, formed part of the old British defensive system that sprang up in front of the Hindenburg Line after the German retreat in 1917. We then fortified them with a number of strong points sited for all-round defence, which the Germans have now been able to use against us with good effect. The 174th Infantry Brigade were attacking on a 3,000 yard front, with two weak battalions in the front line and one in reserve. They penetrated into the villages, but being unable to reduce the many strong points, had to fall back again.

We have been warned that we shall have to pass through them and capture the villages at dawn the day after to-morrow. The 2nd

Battalion, London Regiment, will have the role of capturing Peiziére on the left; the 3rd Battalion, London Regiment, will assault Epéhy on the right. The 4th Battalion will be in reserve. As the three battalions are very weak, the Boche won't have much difficulty in holding the position if he wants to.

In the afternoon the Brigade-Major and I walked forward to the high ground in front of Guyencourt to reconnoitre the position. The weather had been unsettled all day, and we were caught in an unusually heavy hailstorm. As it passed away to the east, visibility became remarkable, and, the sun lighting on the villages of Peiziére and Epéhy, they stood out against the black storm clouds on the horizon in such bold relief that they seemed not more than 500 yards distant, though in reality they were nearly 2,000. The position is strong, the villages, which are contiguous, extending for nearly two miles along the top of a hill presenting a concave front to our lines. From the centre of this hill a spur juts out to the west, separating the approach into two valleys. Thus, troops advancing up either valley are enfiladed both from the central spur and from one or other of the horns of the concave hill. To the north-west of the position, and in advance of it, is Chapel Hill, which the enemy still holds. Our heavies were shelling it, sending high into the air great spurts of dirty yellow mud and smoke. Unless the division on the left co-operates and captures Chapel Hill, I

am afraid we shall not have much chance of success.

9th September.

About midnight a large German aeroplane hovered over us for what seemed a very long time—in reality about half an hour—dropping bombs at irregular intervals. Fortunately none fell close enough to us to do us any harm. At 4.30 a.m. we were awakened by a loud crash. A pause of three or four minutes; then the whistling of a large shell coming closer and closer culminated in another crash, and the rattle of splinters on the roof of our elephant hut. For over an hour 5.9 inch howitzer shells continued to drop unpleasantly close, during which time we lay in bed and cracked jokes to keep our spirits up, for the elephant shelter, not being riveted, afforded no protection from shell-fire. In the morning I found that most of the shells had fallen in a field 200 yards away, the other side of a farm building, the highwalls of which had protected us from splinters.

No less than five booby traps had been discovered by the R.E. in cellars in Lieramont prior to our arrival. They were all of the same type—a 5.9 inch howitzer shell fixed to a small box by wires. If the box is moved, the shell is detonated. We also discovered two shells buried under the cross-roads outside our Headquarters with a "burning" fuse attached. Apparently the enemy had left in too great a hurry to light the train.

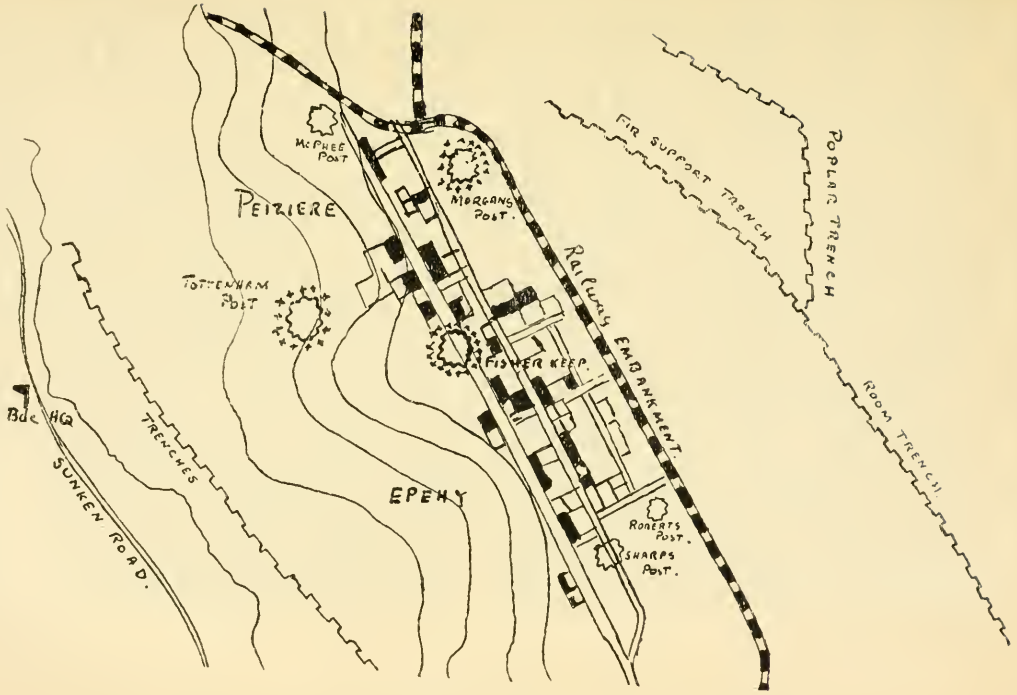
In the afternoon I walked over to Nurlu, a large village on the Péronne Road. Like Lieramont and all the other villages round here, it must have been rich and prosperous, to judge by the remains of the houses, which are strongly built of brick and stone. In the cemetery we came across a family vault which had been opened, and as there were no signs of any shell-fire, we must assume that it had been desecrated. The stone slab had been removed from the entrance, and at the foot of half a dozen steps was a broken coffin, in which a skull and the bones of a foot and hand could be discerned among mouldering grave clothes. The vault was that of the family Leriche-Douay. There were memorials to two persons —Pierre Louis Gabriel Leriche, who died in October, 1881, and his wife, who followed him to the grave shortly afterwards. I could only distinguish the remains of one coffin, so the scoundrels who disturbed these honest people's rest must have removed the second. Probably they used it for firewood.

In an extension to the cemetery we found the bodies of three British officers awaiting burial, and a little farther on we came across the grave of Zimmerman, the famous German aviator, who was killed on the 27th March, 1918. The blade of his propeller stood at his head in place of a cross, and on his grave were faded wreaths bearing farewell messages from the officers of his own and other German flying squadrons.

10th September.

This morning we attacked Epéhy and Peizière with no more success than the 174th Brigade met with the day before yesterday. Like them, we were attacking on a 3,000 yards front and, as the Boche meant to hold the position, he had no difficulty in doing so.

The night was stormy and cold, and half a gale from the south-west brought heavy rain, which wet the men to their skins as they marched across country to the assembly positions. The General, Brigade-Major and I turned out at 3 a.m., and after a hasty breakfast set off in the dark to find advanced Brigade Headquarters, which were located in an elephant shelter in some trenches on the northern outskirts of Guyencourt. We got very wet about the legs and feet and, to make matters worse, I fell into a shell-hole full of water soon after our start. We experienced great difficulty in finding our way in the darkness and did not reach our Headquarters until just after the barrage had started. These walks in pouring rain and pitch darkness, across country pitted with shell-holes and strewn with wire, are most unpleasant, and it is remarkable that the troops ever reach their assembly positions. At first the attack went well. On the left the 2nd Battalion, closely followed by the 4th, passed through Peizière and reached the railway embankment beyond. On the right, the 3rd Battalion passed through



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE ATTACKS ON PEIZIÉRE AND EPÉHY, SEPTEMBER 1918

Epéhy and also reached the embankment. Unfortunately the Battalions were so weak that no troops were left to mop up the various strong points, with the result that the German garrisons of these posts, who had gone to earth when the barrage came down, now emerged and fired upon our men. The latter, finding themselves engaged from the rear and both flanks had no alternative but to fall back. A few were captured, but most succeeded in fighting their way out of the villages and establishing themselves in the trenches immediately west of Epéhy and Peizière. During the day we were reinforced by a Company of the 8th Battalion London Regiment (174th Infantry Brigade), while the 7th Londons formed a defensive flank on our right.

Our losses were heavy. The 2nd Battalion lost about 200 officers and men, the 4th an equal number. The 3rd Battalion's casualties were at least 150. Thus the attack had cost us about half our strength—a costly operation. Owing to the scarcity of drafts, orders were received during the afternoon to amalgamate the 2nd and 4th Battalions, and the 2/24th Battalion London Regiment from the 60th Division in Palestine was now allotted to the Brigade to form its 3rd Battalion. They detrained at Plateau Sidings about 11 p.m., and after an all night journey arrived at Guyencourt about 7 a.m.

In the day's fighting we captured 3 officers and 91 other ranks of the Alpine Corps, but

even so I do not think the enemy's casualties were as heavy as our own. All the prisoners were fine men, and their *moral* good.

During the night, which was fine but squally, enemy aeroplanes were pretty active. Two bombs which fell in the transport lines of our pioneer battalion—the 2/4th Suffolks—killed 2 officers and no less than 60 horses. During this night also our troops were relieved by the Suffolks on the right and 12th London (1/5th I.B.) on the left.

Since August 22nd the 58th Division has advanced 25 miles, fighting all the way. During this time we have met and beaten the 25th, 117th, 232nd German Divisions, as well as elements of the 2nd Guards Division. Yesterday we were faced by the redoubtable Alpine Corps, composed of the 1st and 2nd Jaeger Regiments and the Bavarian Body Infantry Regiment. The Jaegers are picked troops, and at the beginning of the war a Jaeger Battalion was attached to each active division, as light Riflemen specially trained in scouting and outpost work. In 1916, nine of these battalions were grouped into the Alpine Corps for service in the Carpathians. Since then they have fought in Italy and have always earned distinction. One of the battalions —the 10th Jaegers—wear a light blue band on the right sleeve with the inscription "Gibraltar," having served in that fortress side by side with British troops under Sir George Eliot during the siege in 1779–1782.

13th September.

Rather better weather this morning. We were awakened by the sound of heavy gunfire, and soon afterwards learnt that the Germans were making a counter-attack on our immediate left. I hurried up to a hill north of Lieramont from which I could see the battle. The enemy's barrage was advancing in spurts of smoke and flame ; our own protective barrage being steady on a line in front of our trenches. It seemed impossible that any men could pass alive through this wall of fire and iron ; nor did any penetrate it in fact, for we learned afterwards that the enemy was stopped in front of our trenches. The Germans were putting a lot of heavy shells into Heudicourt, where smoke, tinged orange with brick dust, was going up in cascades. Of men, just a few dots running here and there like ants amid the shell burst, and then disappearing into the earth. How puny man seems in comparison with the awful engines of destruction which he has invented for his own undoing.

This afternoon W. and I rode to Péronne, distant about six miles as the crow flies. Not being crows, we went by a more devious route, thereby considerably increasing the distance. We passed through a very pleasant country ; steep-sided spurs with well-wooded slopes inclining gradually to the River Somme, divided by deep valleys in which nestle the remains of once prosperous villages. The soil

is of chalk and, as usual in a chalk country, one meets with rugged escarpments and sheer banks. A few miles east of the Péronne–Nurlu road the chalk ceases and gives place to sandstone; the slopes become smoother; the landscape more undulating and of gentler aspect. The Péronne road is paved with stones, which makes bad going for horses; but whenever we tried to strike across country we ran foul of wire, for barbed wire and old telephone lines are spread like a net over the country.

Péronne must have been a pleasant little city in peace-time. It is surrounded by a ditch and battlements and we entered the gate of St. Denis, past the remains of what looked like an old castle, but I could not fix its epoch by the ruins. The town is not reduced to a heap of dust and rubbish like Albert, but hardly a house remains habitable, only the walls still standing. None the less, Péronne seemed a more melancholy spectacle than Albert. Perhaps the fact of the ruin not being so complete, recalls more forcibly the prosperity of the past, and Péronne is historic and picturesque, whereas Albert was bourgeois even in destruction. The streets have been renamed by the Germans and the old French sign-boards torn down. Indeed to judge from the signs and notice boards, the city might be German. Such notices as "Beutesammelstelle" ("Booty or Salvage Collecting Station), "Flieger Schutz" ("Aero-

plane Shelter ")—the frequency of this notice bears testimony to the activity of our bombers —" Marketenderei " (" Canteen "), " Kriegslazarette " (" Military Hospital "), and a hundred others are everywhere to be seen, for the German loves to label everything. One cannot help admiring the painstaking thoroughness of the beast. A despatch rider coming into a town in British occupation wastes a great deal of time finding his destination; a German despatch rider, on the other hand, finds a succession of notice boards, or inscriptions on the walls of houses, pointing infallibly to every military Headquarters or establishment in the town. Close to the principal square are the ruins of a handsome church. I should think it had been built early in the thirteenth century, when Gothic style was beginning to enrich its early simplicity with a little of that decoration which, in France at any rate, degenerated into a profusion of elaborate tracery. There remain only the pointed arches of the nave supported on slender columns springing from a mass of broken masonry; a few yards of buttressed walls, and a sadly defaced but still beautiful western façade.

We rode home by a more direct route along the deep valley running north-east from Péronne to Lieramont, past the villages of Bussu, Driencourt, Templeux-La-Fosse, and Aizecourt-le-Bas—all in ruins.

14th September.

Last night about 9 o'clock we were sitting in the elephant shelter which serves as our mess, drinking an after-dinner glass of port-wine, when the sentry sounded three blasts on his whistle—the signal that enemy aeroplanes are about. I went outside where I could hear the drone of a large bombing machine and saw, in the direction of Péronne, searchlights slowly patrolling the sky. Gradually they converged until six met at a point. For a time I could see nothing, but gradually distinguished a tiny object like a silver moth held in the relentless point of light. Anti-aircraft shells now began to burst in little spurts of flame all round the apex of the arc, and tracer bullets shot up from Lewis guns on the ground. Gradually the beams bent eastward in unison still holding in their little circle of light that hapless aeroplane despite its struggles to escape. The anti-aircraft fire ceased, the beams bent lower and lower towards the horizon. A feeling of disappointment came over me at the thought that the aeroplane was going to escape, for we all greatly fear and consequently greatly hate these night bombers. Suddenly there was a vivid flash, then a magnificent pyrotechnic display of red, green, and white signal lights as the rockets and flares carried by the aeroplane went off; a ball of flame with a tail like a comet falling vertically to the earth; a final

blaze of light, then darkness, and the sound of men cheering for miles around.

Half an hour later three whistles were blown again, and I found the same searchlights holding a second aeroplane. This time they bent in our direction until their apex was directly overhead. There was the raider not more than 4,000 feet up; a very large machine, silver in the searchlights, flying at a great pace, nose down with the engines full on in an effort to escape. Suddenly a stream of bullets from one of our night scouts poured out of the darkness into the heart of the enemy machine. The roar of the raider's engines ceased. There was a second display of coloured signals, and then a small ball of light gliding towards the horizon. The fusilage had undoubtedly been set on fire, but as yet the petrol tanks had not caught. I watched the little ball of fire curve down towards the north-east, and it did not need much imagination to picture the desperate struggle for life in which the pilot was engaged. As the machine neared the horizon, its occupants threw out flares to light up the ground so that they could land After this I lost sight of the raider, but learned the next morning that it had landed behind our lines, and that the crew had been captured. Our vociferous joy over the destruction of two bombers, and the prospect of immunity for the rest of the night, was suddenly curtailed by the whistle of a large shell culminating in a terrific explosion. The tin hut seemed to be

lifted almost a foot, the furniture was thrown violently about, a blast of air extinguished the lights, and there was a sound of broken china. We all rushed to our little dug-out in the garden and remained there for three-quarters of an hour while shells continued to fall in the vicinity. The dug-out was by no means shell-proof, but at least we were safe from splinters, and the chances of a direct hit are small. When the shelling ceased, we emerged and discovered that the first shell had fallen within ten yards of the mess on top of a tent which the Brigade-Major had caused to be pitched for himself. He was not sleeping in it, because I had forgotten to tell the Engineers to dig a revetment as a shelter from shell and bomb splinters. Several curious things had happened in the Mess. The flat jam and butter dishes had both been lifted off the table and landed on the floor right side up and unbroken, and the top of two valuable wine glasses of thick cut glass found in some château or other had been cut clean off, leaving the stems standing on the table.

After we had turned in, the Boche put over a few shrapnel and gas shells, but nothing to worry about. One consolation is that we give the Germans much worse than we receive. Colonel J., commanding 290th Brigade R.F.A., who came to dine, told us that his brigade had 1000 rounds to loose off in harassing fire during the night. The Boche guns are, moreover, more or less blind, having to rely on

balloons for observation as his aeroplanes seldom cross our lines, whereas ours are over his all day. To-day one of our machines shot down two of his observation balloons which were looking right into our part of the front.

15th September.

To-day being Sunday there was a church parade in a field behind Headquarters; a stiff formal affair, the men taking little part in the singing of hymns and none in "God Save the King." The officers were little better. Communion service, held afterwards in a large barn, was a far more sincere affair. The music was supplied by a broken-down piano, the only article of furniture found more or less intact in the village. The men remained kneeling on the muddy floor throughout the service; their attitude was most reverent and they joined in the hymns with fervour. I was particularly struck by the face of one man who came up to communicate. He was an exceptionally ugly individual, with flat nose and square jaw—the traditional burglar face—and as the padre handed him the sacrament his countenance underwent extraordinary contortions, as if he was about to howl. I suppose these horrible grimaces represented some form of religious fervour.

Most of the men are very young, but their faces are prematurely grave, and with good cause. They are very gallant fighters, but many are hardly strong enough for the strain

of war. For the most part they have good and pleasant faces. I wonder if the people at home realize how short of drafts we are, that boys are having to do the work of men, and that this, the greatest offensive movement in the history of war, is being carried out by battalions which seldom count more than 400 tired men.

This evening about 6 p.m. a German aeroplane dived out of the clouds and put down one of our observation balloons in flames. The two observers jumped out in time, and seemed to make a successful descent. It must be a most unpleasant experience coming down 3000 feet, dangling on the end of a parachute. The German aeroplane escaped under heavy machine gun and Archie fire.

16th September.

Sleep was again impossible before 2 a.m. The first German aeroplanes were heard about 9 p.m., and shortly afterwards one was shot down in flames a few miles to the north. Undeterred by this grim spectacle, other machines continued to come over in relays throughout the night. The enemy was making a great effort in the air and I had never heard so many bombs dropped before. I lay in bed feeling very frightened as I listened to huge aeroplanes buzzing overhead and felt the ground tremble from the shock of bursting bombs. To add to the turmoil, two 9.2 inch howitzers of ours were firing over our heads

from the other side of the village, and with each discharge the hut seemed to rise in the air. The climax was reached at midnight, when the enemy's artillery joined in the concert by dropping heavy shells all round Lieramount—a tune which it continued to play for two hours.

This morning we moved to the Headquarters vacated by the 175th Infantry Brigade in a chalk pit half-way between Lieramont and Guyencourt, in anticipation of the attack in which we are to take part on the 18th.

Our 2/24th Battalion of the London Regiment relieves the Suffolks in the line to-night and comes under orders of the 174th Infantry Brigade. Our 2nd Battalion relieves the 6th Battalion in close support near Guyencourt. This afternoon I bicycled over to Manancourt, about six miles distant, to arrange certain details of liaison with the 62nd Infantry Brigade, who are to attack on our left. The battle is to be on a pretty wide front, both the 3rd and 4th Armies taking part, with the object of driving the enemy out of his outpost positions back on to the Hindenburg Line.

The weather continues fine and very warm, which is good, as in this devastated country the men are dependent on stray elephant shelters and bivouac sheets for shelter. Unless we strike human habitations before the winter sets in, they will suffer considerably from exposure. Our new Headquarters are not so roomy as those we have

just vacated, but much safer. I am sharing a tiny tin hut with W., at whose recommendation I have just read Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice." A delightful book —her style is so simple, her sense of humour so keen, her power of portraying human character so accurate. All her characters live and have their being among us to-day just as they did in the early Victorian epoch. They doubtless would be found in all ages, because they are true to life, and human beings change but little throughout the ages. She never says a word too much, and consequently one's interest in her story never flags. Who could fail to love Elizabeth or respect Mr. Darcy? Which of us has not met a living person as pedantic and priggish as Mr. Collins; as foolish and vapid as Mrs. Benet? The amiable but easily led Mr. Bingley and the saintly Jane still walk among us; embittered Miss Bingleys still poison the stream of happier lives with their perennial venom. Nor are agreeable scoundrels such as Wickham as scarce as might have been hoped from the progress of society.

17th September.

In the early hours of the morning an extraordinarily heavy storm burst upon us. The rain came down in a deluge, the wind blew a hurricane, lightning split the heavens, and for a time almost continuous thunder drowned the guns. Tents were blown down and dug-

outs flooded. Happy those who, like W. and me, possessed a tin hut which really did keep out the water.

A busy day preparing for to-morrow's battle, which is more in the nature of a set piece attack than anything we have done lately. Since August 22nd we have only had a few hours' notice for our attacks, brief orders for which have then been written in message form, but for this show we have issued quite elaborate orders and instructions. Rumour has it that to-morrow's battle is to be big and decisive. "All the way from the North Sea to Nestle's Swiss Milk factory," as one of the men expressed it.

About 10 p.m. we saw a German bombing plane shot down in flames in the North.

18th September.

We attacked at 5.20 a.m. in conjuction with the 12th Division on our right and the 21st Division on our left; beyond these, other divisions were attacking and beyond them others still. We turned out at 3.15 a.m. and after some tea and ham sandwiches—horrible food at this hour of the morning—the General, Brigade-Major and I set out for our advanced Headquarters in a cellar on the northern outskirts of Guyencourt. The weather was execrable—heavy rain and strong south-westerly wind—and we made our way across country with difficulty in the darkness, stumbling over the prostrate forms of men of the 12th and

21st Divisions lying out in the mud waiting to advance and pass through as the attack progresses. Some of them were singing "Onward, Christian soldiers," most of them were trying to sleep. All tracks were congested with guns and limbers, all moving forward.

I think the Germans suspected an attack, for they had been putting over gas shells all night and were still doing so, but, though the smell was strong in the valleys, the heavy rain had laid the fumes, and I do not think many casualties occurred. We found our cellar commodious but by no means shell proof. On the wall was a notice to say that it had been constructed by the 4th Australian Pioneers in December, 1917.

At 5.20 a.m. the barrage came down and an arc of 180 degrees from north to south was lighted by gun flashes rippling along the hills. It was still dark; and, when dawn began to pierce the yellow rain clouds, a thick mist arose from the earth and drew across the battle-field an impenetrable curtain, from beyond which came the throb and roar of a thousand guns. Soon afterwards 5.9 inch shells began to burst round our dug-out, into which we retired feeling none too secure. There was a bad moment when a shell fell five yards away and knocked down part of the entrance, but fortunately this was the climax of our troubles, for the Germans now lengthened their range.

Our brigade was attacking on a front of

1,200 yards, narrowing to 800 yards on the final objective. Our jumping-off line was the trenches west of Peiziére. We were to pass through the village and capture the railway cutting beyond as a first objective; after a pause of 18 minutes, to allow our troops to re-form, we were to proceed to capture Poplar trench some 1,500 yards further east. Here the barrage was to halt for an hour, during which time the 35th Brigade (12th Division) on our right, and the 62nd Brigade (21st Division) on our left, were to extend their flanks so as to pinch us out of the line. They were then to carry on the attack for another 2,000 yards or so.

The 2/2nd Battalion led the attack with two companies in front line and two in support, while two companies of the 3rd Brigade were echelonned on the right, to protect their flank in the event of the 35th Brigade not keeping pace with our advance. The 2/24th Battalion, preceded by two tanks, followed in close support with the rôle of mopping up the various strong points in Peiziére. Behind them were the two remaining companies of the 3rd Battalion. The whole brigade numbered 1,200 bayonets.

Our troops went through to the railway cutting with slight losses, and after the quarter of an hour's halt went on as far as Fir Support Trench, a few hundreds yards this side of our final objective—Poplar Trench. Unfortunately, the brigade on our right was not so success-

ful, their infantry losing direction in the mist and getting badly mixed up. When they met our two tanks, which after passing through Peiziére turned south to assist in reducing Epéhy, they mistook them for German tanks and were thrown into some disorder. Our right flank was therefore left in the air and we were considerably troubled by rifle and machine fire from Fisher's Keep, a strong fort on the northern edge of Epéhy. It was not until evening that this fort was reduced and then only with the co-operation of our 3rd Battalion. We also experienced difficulty in reducing the strong points in Peiziére; Morgan's Post in particular held out until well on into the afternoon, when it was captured together with its garrison of 40 men by Colonel P., of the 3rd Battalion, and his runner "Faithful."

As a result, considerable confusion prevailed and it was not until evening that we were able to disentangle the real situation from a large number of contradictory reports. We then found that we had captured Peiziére and were established in Fir Support Trench, 1000 yards east of it. Our prisoners numbered 250, most of them from the Alpine Corps, but a few from the 201st Division. They were a fine body of men—among them ten officers, some artillerymen and a doctor.

The German artillery fire was not heavy, in fact they seldom put up an effective S.O.S. barrage these days. I suppose they are short of

ammunition, or perhaps, since our attacks have a habit of reaching their artillery positions, they are busy getting their guns back. They are also very much hampered by their inferiority in the air. During the battle long columns of our men and artillery moved freely across the open hills, to take up more advanced positions, just as in an old battle of manœuvres, or a field day on Salisbury Plain. Moreover, nearly all our batteries were firing in the open, and have been doing so with impunity ever since the offensive started,

The 21st Division on our left made good progress, capturing the whole of their objective and Villers Guislain beyond it, but the Brigade on our right, did not get beyond the railway cutting east of Epéhy, so the advance was held up and we were compelled to remain in the line when we should have been pinched out.

I went back to the rear Headquarters about 4 p.m. and had a bath and tea. After dinner we saw a very heavy bombardment break out in the north. The hills were lighted with vivid flashes, and smoke shells which burst into red flames as they fell, and then emitted dense pillars of white smoke, were mingled with the barrage of high explosive. Red, green and white S.O.S. signals, sent up in profusion, marked the opposing lines of trenches. The scene was rendered particularly weird by the fact that not a single sound of the bom

bardment could be heard. We learnt later that the Germans had made a big counter-attack against Gouzeaucourt.

I turned in at 11 p.m. but only got two hours' sleep, for at 1 a.m. the Brigade-Major sent for me to go back to forward Headquarters. There I passed a busy night getting out orders for the morrow, most of which were cancelled as soon as drafted. The atmosphere in our dug-out was horrible. The General, S., W. and the artillery liaison officer were sleeping on wire and boxwood beds. Clerks, orderlies and signalmen covered the remaining floor space. If the gas curtain over the door was opened, a cold draught made life intolerable, so that we had practically no ventilation.

19th September.

At 11 a.m. the Brigade on our right attacked under a barrage to capture Room Trench, Ockenden Trench and Deelish Avenue. We were to co-operate by clearing the enemy out of a small triangle of trenches formed by Poplar Trench and Fir Support, from which he could enfilade their advance. We put down a barrage with Stokes Mortars on the triangle of trenches, after which a company of the 2nd Battalion tried to rush them. They got to within a hundred yards of their objective, but were there brought to a halt. A bomb fight now ensued which lasted all day, the enemy putting up the most determined

resistance. It was not until the Sergeant-Major in charge of the garrison was killed that these redoubtable Jaegers surrendered at about 8 p.m. We found many dead and wounded in the trenches.

At 11 a.m. we moved our Headquarters forward to a dug-out in a sunken road on the north-eastern outskirts of Pieziére. The dug-out was exceptionally large, consisting of a long gallery with chambers opening out on either side thirty to forty feet underground. It had no less than six entrances.

A wonderful sunset this evening. A line of purple clouds standing out like mountains against the western horizon, and the sky a blaze of glory above. Shadows falling on the wide Somme plains ; a partridge calling in the stubble ; the peace of evening falling upon the tired earth, disturbed by the occasional crash of a bursting shell, a reminder of how beastly man has made this beautiful world with his quarrels.

20th September.

A most excellent sleep on the floor of a tin shelter at one of the entrances to the dug-out, for I could not face the atmosphere below, and in the morning the welcome news that we are to be relieved to-night by the 175th Infantry Brigade.

After lunch the Brigade Major and I had a walk round Peiziére, visiting the various strong points—Morgan, McPhee, Maclean and

Tottenham. The last named is situated just outside the village on the western side. It is a circular system of trenches with dug-outs and wire, built by us in 1917. After the unsuccessful attempt to capture Peiziére on the 10th, we remained in possession of Tottenham Post, but the 175th Brigade, who relieved us that night, lost it on the following day together with the company which garrisoned it, Nor is this to be wondered at, for on the western circumference of the post thick bushes and ruined walls extend to within a few yards of the trenches. The enemy opened a hurricane bombardment with trench mortars, hidden in the village, and then taking advantage of this cover rushed the position. A desperate fight must have ensued, for British and German equipment, rifles, bombs and helmets are jumbled together in the bottom of the trenches, and British and German dead are lying together where they fell in hand to hand fighting. On the slopes of the hill west of Tottenham Post are a good many of our dead, some, who fell on the 8th and 10th, in an advanced state of decomposition. The Germans had removed the boots and socks from most of our men.

The other posts, all of which are situated among the ruins of the village, showed similar evidence of hard fighting. There were a good many dead Jaegers in the trenches—fine men for the most part. We noticed one in particular, lying on his back with one hand clasping his

tunic, which he had torn open in his last agony. He was small, but one of the best made men I have ever seen, and his handsome marble-white face was thrown into relief by a black beard. We also saw a great number of German machine guns and several trench mortars. We afterwards visited the 2nd Battalion Headquarters in a dug-out in the deep railway cutting which runs along the east of the village. The dug-out was crowded with men and the atmosphere was awful. There is a sickly, earthy, almost death-like smell about these deep dug-outs which revolts me. Peiziére is on the top of the last spur this side of the Hindenburg Line. In front of us the ground slopes down to the St. Quentin Canal, behind which run those famous trenches, and from the top of the embankment we could see far across the canal into the enemy's country. In the middle distance was Vendhuile, through which the Hindenburg Line passes, standing like a bastion on an eminence which commands all approaches.

At 5 p.m. W. and I left to ride back to our new Headquarters, which are in the large quarry near which we spent the day in a pigeon loft on our way forward to attack Peiziére for the first time. In its sides are cut terraces, each three or four yards wide, and our new home, a little encampment of tin huts and tents, is in the topmost terrace, about 150 feet from the bottom of the quarry and about 20 feet from the top, so we ought to be pretty safe from aeroplane bombs.

We rode to our new home in a lovely autumn evening. That indescribable feeling of melancholy which comes with the death of summer was in the air; it haunted the sunset and the trees.

21st and 22nd September.

Camped at the quarry. The weather has become unsettled with a good deal of rain, and as our little encampment, perched like the nest of sea-birds on the face of a cliff, is exposed to the full blast of the south-west wind, it is hard to keep warm or dry in a tent. Life is dreary in this desolate country when out of the line. There is little work to do, so one has to fall back on reading and walking, and there is not much pleasure in the latter, for wherever one goes there is the same sad spectacle of ruined villages, shattered woods and barren fields. How different from a jolly tramp in England before the war; happy villages, green woods and well-tilled fields, with the prospect of some good cold beef, a cut of Stilton and a tankard of beer at an inn at the end of the morning's journey. War is a sad business and makes one very primitive. One's thoughts are chiefly about what the billet for the night will be, whether rations will be got up, if there will be an issue of rum, or any extras from the canteen. It is only with peace and leisure that our thoughts wax big and mystic.

W. is a very pleasant companion. He is in the Board of Trade and was for some time

Secretary to Mr. Winston Churchill. He takes a keen interest in literature, so that we have many long and interesting discussions. I have to thank him for lending me the works of Jane Austen, which he always carries about with him in a pocket edition. The General is all that is charming, courtesy itself, and S., the Brigade-Major, the best of friends and soldiers, but one of our officers is a sore trial. A most gallant and efficient soldier, he has the misfortune to be of German origin, which regrettable fact is apparent in his every action. Though he has a good heart and means well towards his fellow creatures—for the benefit of whom he advocates the most advanced socialistic reforms—his lack of tact, his loud, harsh voice, his little beady eyes darting hither and thither behind large spectacles, make even altruism hateful when expressed by him. He is the typical German professor in his manners, if not in his thoughts. At dinner he lays down the law at inordinate length on every sort of subject to the General, who listens with unfailing courtesy. After having monopolized the conversation for an hour or so, he will smack his lips and exclaim, "I like an argument; it gives such a fine opportunity for the exchange of opinions." How socially unattractive the Germans are. I suppose this is not to be wondered at when one remembers that they translate our word "tact" by the sledge-hammer polysyllable "geschicklichkeitsgefühl."

23rd September.

Very heavy rain last night. We are to move back to-morrow to Montauban in the very heart of the devastated Somme country; not a pleasant prospect. We had an issue of rum at dinner. N . . ., the intelligence officer, is always very amusing on these occasions. He is a character such as Dickens would have loved to portray—a solicitor's clerk of middle age, large and angular, with a long face of parchment hue. After a glass of rum punch he assumes a dare-devil, scatter-paper demeanour, so foreign to his usual air of patient respectability, as to cause us intense amusement.

To night, as usual, our argumentative friend laid down the law, pouring forth a ceaseless stream of turgid social platitudes into the General's long-suffering ear, so I slipped away and walked awhile in the brilliant moonlight. The silhouette of the Péronne-Cambrai road on the top of the ridge is always picturesque, by moonlight doubly so. The outline of the tortured trees, guns and limbers with their turbanned native drivers, a squadron of cavalry, lorries, or the grotesque light railway engine, all pass like shadows across the skyline.

A very noisy night. From the intense artillery fire in the north it is evident that one side or the other is attacking.

24th September.

The brigade embussed at the cross-roads in Villers-Faucon at 2 p.m. and proceeded to

Caterpillar Wood, Montauban. To W. and me fell the unpleasant task of superintending the embussing. We walked over to Villers-Faucon, a distance of seven miles, and as the day was hot I was tired out by the time we arrived, for W.'s legs are very long and he walks so fast that I had to run beside him like a small terrier. The Germans were shelling the cross-roads where the head of our column was to halt with a high velocity gun, so we had to stop it a few hundred yards short. Luckily the shelling ceased before we got under way, and so we suffered no casualties.

The road on which the embussing took place was fairly well screened from observation, but I think an unjustifiable risk was taken in carrying out the operation so close to the front. Large numbers of American troops, who have come to relieve the 3rd Corps, were marching along the road ; there was also a lot of our own horse and motor transport, as well as guns. No arrangements had been made for traffic control, so at times the road was completely blocked by a solid mass of troops and transport, about two miles long. If an enemy aeroplane had happened to spot the state of affairs and had turned a few batteries on to this mass of humanity, a very grave tragedy would have resulted. By dint of forcing our way up and down the column by sheer force, W. and I managed to get the troops into the 129 covered lorries in an hour and a half, twenty men per bus. We then made a most un-

pleasant journey via Moislains, Bouchavesnes, Combles, Guillemont, Trones Wood, to Montauban, during which our eyes, noses and lungs became impregnated with a viscous mixture of dust and petrol fumes. Only those who have driven along dusty roads in a motor-lorry column can realize the full beastliness of such a mode of progression.

At Bouchavesnes we entered on the 1916 battle-field, and from here onwards nothing but a wilderness of desolation was to be seen, stretching away across the hills as far as the eye could reach. A chill came over me as we entered this land of crosses, and I felt that I should never be warm again. Crosses and shell-holes everywhere. Armies marching hastily had scraped graves in the ditches all along both sides of the road. One in particular I noticed, erected by the Germans to the memory of a British soldier; it bore the inscription :

Hier Ruht
SMITH.

Poor unknown Smith! Many of your name are taking their long sleep on this battle-field.

The villages have completely disappeared and are only to be distinguished by notice boards, save at Combles where the walls of a single house remain; how they escaped destruction is not to be explained. Whole woods have been similarly obliterated. Trones Wood is alone distinguishable by reason of

two fine crosses, one of stone and the other of wood, erected by the 18th Division, the one to the men of the Division who died in its capture in 1916, and the second to those who fell in its recapture a few weeks ago.

We are lodged in some wooden huts built by the Germans. They are comfortable, but even darkness cannot shut out the horror of the Golgotha around us. Fortunately we are not to stay long, for the day after to-morrow we entrain at Mericourt L'Abbaye on the Ancre and travel to Mont St. Eloi, about six miles south of Lens. We are to be transferred to the 1st Army; but hope to get a rest on the way.

How good it will be to see inhabited villages and to live in a house once more. I don't think anyone could realize to the full the horror of this war without seeing the Somme battle-field; it is terrible to think of even the dead having to lie in such a land of sorrow.

26th September.

A very cold night, and as all our kit had to be packed and the waggons despatched to Mericourt by 11 p.m., we had no covering save the clothes we stood up in. I crept into a dug-out and wrapping myself in my mackintosh managed to get a couple of hours' sleep, before the cold drove me to get up and walk about. The troops marched off at various hours during the night, for the first train was to leave at 8 a.m., and Mericourt is ten good miles away.

At 4.45 a.m. the General, Brigade-Major and I set off on horseback. The morning was fine and frosty, with a moon at the last quarter riding high in the sky, and the Somme country, with its white crosses and twisting chalky trenches, looked weird and ghostly in its light. We passed Mametz and Fricourt. From the trenches in front of the latter place, the British troops jumped off on the 1st July, 1916, and here are the gigantic craters caused by the mines which we exploded on that fateful day.

As we passed through ruined Méaulte, dawn was breaking grey and cheerless. At Mericourt we found that the admirable William, our waiter, had established himself in a box waggon next to our carriage, and prepared for us a breakfast of bacon and tomatoes on a primus stove. He must have felt quite at home, because in peace-time he is a waiter in a North-Western Railway dining-car.

Our train left at 8.38 a.m., and as we progressed down the Somme Valley, signs of war became less and less apparent. At Corbie, many of the houses are more or less intact, and beautiful poplars, unscarred by shell-fire, grow beside the sluggish river. Amiens has been badly knocked about, especially along the railway, but the inhabitants are returning, and the city is slowly resuming its normal life. The Cathedral, as seen from the train, appeared to be undamaged, and I am told that only two shells actually hit it.

From Amiens we branched off to the north

and, as the train toiled slowly up the long incline to Doullens, it was an indescribable pleasure to sit at the window and see once more inhabited villages, men and women working in the fields, and hills covered with fair green trees. After Doullens, we passed through the junction of St. Pol, branching off here eastwards to Acq, where we detrained about 5 p.m. William prepared us lunch and tea in the box waggon, and so leisurely was the pace of the train that he was able to pass the food along the footboard into our carriage. Mont St. Eloi is about a mile and a half from Acq, and we are billeted in the doctor's house, a pleasant little villa with a walled garden. In front is Mont St. Eloi, an isolated eminence about 200 feet high, surmounted by magnificent twin towers, part of a church, all other traces of which have long since disappeared. The view from the mount is very fine; south-east one can see as far as the outskirts of Arras; to the south and west the wide plain is only bounded by the horizon; eastward, Vimy Ridge, and, north-east, Nôtre-Dame de Lorette bar the view.

We are to go into the line north of Lens in two days' time. This is a well-organized sector over which there has been no advance or retreat since 1914—a land of well-built camps, with full canteens and smart-looking troops. As our own mess was not functioning, General C. took the Brigade-Major and me over to Camblain L'Abbé and gave us dinner

at the officers' club—a most luxurious repast washed down by a bottle of sweet champagne. It is nice to be in an inhabited area once more.

27th September.

At Mont St. Eloi. After an early tea the Brigade-Major and I rode over to Nôtre-Dame de Lorette of sinister memory, for the capture of which, in 1915, the French are said to have sacrificed 150,000 men. I can well understand why they thought it worth such a price, for it is the last high ground this side of the Great North European Plain which stretches right across Belgium and Germany. It is a hog backed spur about 350 feet high, jutting out into the plain of Artois. To the north and east it falls steeply away to an absolutely flat plain, in which are the principal industrial and coal mining districts of Northern France. Liévin lies at the foot; a little further is Lens; beyond that Cité St. Pierre, Cité Ste. Elizabeth, and a dozen other mining villages. For mile after mile, towns, villages, pit heads, factories—in such proximity one to another as to form a continuous network—are all in ruins. Further west is Bully Grenay, a partially ruined town, but the smoke and steam coming from the tall chimneys denote that, although only seven miles from the front line and exposed to shelling by high velocity guns, the indomitable French are still working the mines. Northward we could see as far as Mount Kemmel, and southward to Bourlon

wood and hill, near Cambrai, which, as it afterwards transpired, the Canadians were capturing at that very moment.

Beyond the coal fields are the towers and spires of towns and villages which have endured the martyrdom of German occupation for four years. Most prominent of all, the spire of Mons-en-Pévèle, on an isolated hill a few miles this side of the Belgian frontier.

As we looked, a heavy rain squall burst on the plains. Slate-coloured, smoke-like clouds, lit by a yellow wintry sunlight, blotted out towns, villages, and great black, melancholy slag heaps from view. We turned and rode homewards very much impressed by the sadness of the scene, and by thoughts of the awful waste of human life and labour which this war has brought about.

After dinner the Brigade-Major and I walked up to the ruined towers of Mont St. Eloi. Our aeroplanes were just coming over on their way to bomb behind the German lines. While over our own lines, they carry a white light on each wing and another on the tail, so that their form is, as it were, outlined. At one time we saw no less than seven in the air, and ever fresh relays came on behind in groups of three or four. They were flying about 3,000 feet, and the noise of their engines was very loud. Heard in the darkness and silence of night, it conveyed an extraordinary impression of mysterious power. As each machine reached the German lines, the lights

were switched out, and thereafter distant reverberations and flashes marked the dropping of their bombs.

28th September.

I hanked over to the clothing store at Aubigny in the afternoon to try to buy certain articles of clothing of which I stood in need. I went via Hecq, Cappelle Fervent and Fremont Cappelle. Aubigny is a pleasant little country town built of good grey stone; indeed most of the villages in this part of the country are well and strongly built of the same material.

29th September.

To-day we relieved the 72nd Infantry Brigade of the 24th Division in the sector between Loos and Lens. I rode on at 10 a.m. to take over from their intelligence officer. Being an inveterate sight-seer I did not follow the high road, but went round by the now historic ruins of Ablain St. Lazare and Souchez, and thence across Notre-Dame de Lorette, with the result that I experienced considerable difficulty in getting down on to the plain the other side, on account of the trenches with which the hill is honeycombed. After that my road ran through Aix Noulette, which is badly knocked about, to Bully Grenay, which is not so badly wrecked, though I should say that one house in three has been damaged by shell-fire. It is still shelled occasionally by long range guns, and is a favourite target for

aeroplane bombs; none the less, it contains many inhabitants. It is curious for us, who have come from the uninhabited and uninhabitable Somme country, to see women washing the family linen, children playing in the streets, and even babies asleep in perambulators so close to the front line.

Our Headquarters are at Fosse 11 de Béthune, about a mile beyond Grenay. We live in the cellars of a ruined building which are roomy, comfortable and lighted by electric light. The ground floor is wrecked, but on the first floor a single room has survived, and in this I have established myself because of my love of fresh air. It is known as the Château Ashmead, but has its disadvantages because it is about the size of a railway station waiting-room and as draughty.

After lunch I went round the line with the intelligence officer of the 72nd Brigade; a most exhausting undertaking, as the forward trenches are 6,000 yards distant from Brigade Headquarters. The dominant features of this part of the line are ruined pitheads—great piles of twisted iron and machinery, standing at the extremity of slag heaps, or "*crassiers*," as they are called in France. We first made our way to Fosse 11 de Lens where the brigade observation post is situated. Running N.W. from Fosse 11 is the famous double Crassier, and a thousand yards away to the north is Loos, the twisted iron of the so-called Tower Bridge still forming a prominent landmark.

The double Crassier is, as its name implies, a double slag heap about 1,000 yards long, and on climbing to the top one discovers that a V-shaped depression about 30 feet deep runs between the two railway lines from which the slag was dumped. After the battle of Loos we held one side and the Germans the other, and the remains of the trenches that were dug in the coal waste are still clearly to be seen.

East of Fosse 11 de Lens is Cité St. Pierre, where our support Battalion is billeted. This mining town is in ruins, but the troops find ample and comfortable accommodation in the cellars, protected from shell-fire by the débris of the houses on top.

In front of St. Pierre runs the Lens-Béthune road which has been repaired and rendered fit for horse and motor traffic up to the suburbs of the former town. The work has had to be done at night, because the Germans can see the road from the eastern half of Lens, which they still hold. This would not have been possible a few months ago, but the Boche does not harass us as he used to, either because he is short of ammunition or because incipient demoralization is making him careless. A bit of both, I expect. Beyond the road is a chaos of craters through which a network of communication trenches lead to the front line. To us who have known nothing but open warfare for the past two months, it is curious to be back in trenches with signboards directing us to every part of the line. Most

curious of all is it to come upon notices such as: "The Hun can see you. Keep in the trench," or "Do not walk along this road; it is dangerous." Underneath the church, or rather the ruins of the church at St. Pierre, hot baths have been installed within 1000 yards of the front line. A case of cleanliness being literally next to godliness.

1st October.

Late last night we received news that Bulgaria has surrendered at discretion, a most surprising and gratifying piece of intelligence. It is hard to understand a so sudden collapse on the part of a nation whose military power still appeared respectable. The Army had suffered a severe reverse, but our captures of guns and prisoners were not great, and it should still have been capable of offering effective resistance on the mountainous frontiers of Bulgaria. Moreover, the German General Staff had offered to send reinforcements, and our own difficulties of transport must have been almost insurmountable in a mountainous country where roads are scarce and winter is setting in. This débacle can only have been due to one of two causes, the complete moral collapse of the nation and army after six years of war—for Bulgaria was fighting for two years before this war began—or to policy. Did Bulgaria realize in time that she was on the losing side, and make up her mind to get out of the war with the best grace

possible? Has she received in advance any assurance of what the Allied peace terms are to be? Can the penitent sinner count on pardon? None of these questions can be decided by an onlooker, but there is certainly much food for thought in this surprising event.

Turkey's land communications with the Central Powers are now severed, and this, in conjunction with her recent disasters in Palestine, is like enough to compel her to an early peace. Our Salonica Army, save for those forces which are required to garrison the Balkans, will then be set free for operations elsewhere.

On the Meuse and in Champagne, things do not seem to have gone just as we hoped. At Cambrai and St. Quentin considerable tactical successes have not been converted into victories. Only in Flanders do we seem to have effected a break through, and I hear the French have 6 infantry and 2 cavalry divisions in reserve behind that front, so perhaps we may be able to gain a great victory in the North. In any case, the Germans can ill afford the loss of 50,000 prisoners and 600 guns, which is about the sum of our captures since the 27th of September.

In the afternoon the Brigade-Major and I went forward to examine the main line of resistance, known as the black line, consisting of a system of trenches and concrete machine-gun emplacements. We were walking back down Church Street through Cité St. Pierre

when, as we approached the Opera House, the enemy began dropping 5.9 inch howitzer shells on our right. The first fell 500 yards away, then two more, each a little closer than the last. The Brigade-Major said to me, "I wonder if they are ranging on the Opera House?" Remembering what the intelligence officer of the 72nd Infantry Brigade had told me, I replied that they often did so. "Right-O," he replied, "into that trench we go."

We had hardly jumped into a trench a few yards from the road, when we heard the long-drawn whistle of a howitzer shell approaching. It grew louder and louder, until it became a scream, a noise only heard when a shell is coming straight for the listener. We held our breath until relieved by the sound of a violent explosion, and the sight of a column of black smoke and flame rising from the road where we had been standing a few seconds before. We went on down the trench for a hundred yards, when the horrible whistle and scream were repeated, and another 5.9 shell burst about ten yards away from us. Luckily, we had ducked well down under the parapet. After this, we evacuated the trench and made a hasty retreat away to the left, out of range of fire.

On another occasion I set out with N., the intelligence officer, to go round the front line and, when going down Cosy Trench, took a wrong turning, lost sight of N. and also lost my

way. Growing tired of wandering about a maze of trenches, I struck across the crater land towards the front. I have seldom seen ground worse ploughed up and going was most difficult. After proceeding about 1,500 yards, expecting every moment to come across a well-manned trench, and seeing not a soul, having, moreover, gone several hundred yards beyond the ridge which I knew to be just behind our front line, I began to grow suspicious and beat a somewhat hasty retreat. From a subsequent study of the map, I made out that I had been a considerable distance in front of our line into no man's land, and must consider myself lucky not to have been captured by the Boche. I had not realized that our front line consisted of isolated posts, so well concealed amid debris and shell holes as to be invisible, unless one happened actually to stumble on to one of them. Between Cité St. Pierre and the spot where I went in error, a distance of 2,000 yards, I saw not a living soul.

After tea to-day I walked down to Bully Grenay and bought some little white grapes and dried figs. The lady of the shop also offered me raisins, but at five francs a pound I found these too expensive. I don't know where she had got them from, unless they had been purloined from Army Stores. The inhabitants of Bully Grenay look harassed, dirty and miserable. Poor people, theirs has been an unhappy existence for the past four years. The fifes and drums of the 2nd Bat-

talion, London Regiment, performing in the Square, gave a touch of gaiety to an otherwise squalid scene.

2nd October.

A prisoner captured on our left this morning by the 174th Infantry Brigade stated that the enemy was retreating on this front. This was confirmed a little later by reports of the blowing up of the three great iron towers of Wingles metal works, the burning of Douai and many other places behind the enemy's lines. At 2 p.m. a German Feldwebel-Leutnant of the 29th Infantry Regiment, 16th Division, who had given himself up to the 173rd Infantry Brigade, was brought into our Headquarters. He stated that his regiment had retreated to the Drocourt-Quéant line two days previously, leaving himself and a small body of men behind as a rearguard. He had waited for us to advance for 48 hours, and as his men's *moral* was poor, and they refused to obey orders, decided to give himself up. I suspect that his *moral* was worse than that of his men, although he was an old soldier with seven years' service, who had fought throughout the present war, and been six times wounded. He was very excitable and appeared to have lost his nerve, saying that he could stand the war no longer and was convinced that Germany must be beaten. Yet he was a fine looking man, and must have been a good soldier in his time to have reached the rank of regimental sergeant-major. He

had not heard of Bulgaria's surrender and would not believe this news, until I shook hands and gave him my word of honour that it was true. After lunch I motored over to Divisional Headquarters, to which I am to be attached for a time.

3rd October.

Spent most of the day in the office assisting to receive and transmit reports from the front line, work that would probably have been done more efficiently by an intelligent clerk.

Our troops continue to advance. They have now gone about 4,000 yards without encountering much opposition, but the Boche continues to shell us with gas shells, and is blowing up mine-shafts and factories as he retreats. I don't think I shall be so happy at Divisional as at Brigade Headquarters, because one feels so far away from the men who are doing the work. Staff officers require training, ability and a faculty for organization, but he who takes his platoon over the top requires courage and initiative, which, I think, are superior qualities.

4th October.

Yesterday evening our troops reached the so-called blue line, which is the line of the railway from Pont-à-Vendin to Avion. Patrols which were pushed out during the night towards Annay and Harnes Fosse met heavy machine-gun fire and were compelled to fall back. That the Germans mean to retreat behind Douai

and Lille there is little doubt, for they are burning dumps far to the east of both these cities and our troops are now only four miles from the latter. I think they will have to evacuate most of France and Belgium in order to shorten their line, because they have not sufficient reserves to stand in their present extended positions. A slight advance of the Allies north of Verdun to Sedan would cut the Germans' main line of communication and separate the two wings of their army, for between them would be the barrier of the Ardennes, a mountainous country through which communications are scarce.

In the afternoon G. and I motored up to St. Pierre and afterwards walked to the Headquarters of the 173rd Infantry Brigade, which are in a stuffy, cramped dug-out amid the ruins of Cité Ste. Emilie. We found the Brigade-Major cheery as usual, despite trying circumstances. We next visited Headquarters of the 2/2nd and 2/24th London Regiment, which are in the railway embankment about 1,500 yards farther east. The ground beyond Ste. Emilie has been subjected at some time or other to extraordinarily heavy shelling, probably last summer, when the Canadians attempted to capture Lens. The railway embankment smelt strongly of mustard gas, the Boche having shelled it heavily yesterday evening.

Battalion Headquarters were in small, deep dug-outs, 20 feet underground or more, in

neither of which could one stand upright. It is hard to understand how Battalion Commanders carry on when one sees them struggling to write orders by the light of a flickering candle in the foulest atmosphere, with hardly room to turn round, and half a dozen people dropping in during the course of every fifteen minutes to give or receive orders, not to mention frequent rings on the telephone. Their lot is not a happy one nowadays, because so many of their subordinates lack experience, and one cannot but admire their fortitude.

5th October.

I had a pleasant ride round the Marqueffles training area with G. this morning. The mining villages in this district are very well laid out. The streets are broad and arranged on an orderly plan ; the cottages substantially built of good red brick, most of them with a garden. They are ugly, of course, and probably look a good deal dirtier when the mines are working.

I dined with F., who has been made G.S.O. II. of a famous Scottish Division. Their Headquarters are at Braquemont in a modern château, the property of a rich coal owner. It was guest night, and the table was decorated with autumn leaves and a few flowers. In the next room the divisional band made strident noises, while we ate a most sumptuous meal, washed down with plenty of wine and

whisky. With the port, the band sergeant came in to receive the thanks of the party. A stout, thickly-built, immensely strong Scotchman, he drained off a tumbler of neat whisky without so much as turning a hair. After this, the noises to which he spurred on the band were even more strident and unpleasant than before. It was a merry party, and while it lasted the war seemed very far away.

I returned to Sains-en-Gohelle about 11 p.m. in time to do night duty. At 1 a.m. we projected gas against Harnes Fosse, from which dominant position machine-guns have given us a good deal of trouble, and at 3 a.m. I received a telephone message saying that the projection had been successful. This probably meant that a certain number of men who hate the war, had nothing to do with starting it, and only want to get back to their wives and families, were even then suffering a lingering and most painful death. Yet I received this news with a feeling of pleasure and at once turned over to go to sleep again. What brutes war makes of us!

6th October.

Our patrols which followed up the gas this morning found the enemy in strength this side of Montigny. One patrol of an officer and fifteen men did not return, and a wounded man who crept back after daylight stated that after passing a ruined mill they were engaged by machine-guns from in front, while

at the same time a party of Germans emerged from the mill and took them in flank. Another patrol had a man shot through the stomach, and had to leave the poor fellow behind.

During the morning I went up to the 3rd Battalion Headquarters in the Railway Embankment. There is only one track forward, which has been constructed with difficulty owing to the state of the ground, and after crossing the ridge in front of Cité Ste. Emilie, it is in full view of the enemy in Harnes Fosse for a distance of 1000 yards or more. When I came over the ridge the Boche began to snipe with a 7.7 mm. field gun, which surprised me, for I had on several previous occasions walked along the same route in peaceful security. Two shells having fallen unpleasantly close, I left the track and began to make my way across country among the shell-holes, but had not gone more than a few yards when I heard more shells coming, so without a moment's delay I jumped into an enormous crater. None too soon, for one shell fell just short of and the other just beyond my place of refuge. Finding further progress across country almost impossible, owing to the size and number of the craters, as well as the amount of barbed wire that was lying about, I returned to the track; only to be driven off it again by another salvo. Once more I tried the cross-country route with exactly the same experience as before, save that, to my disgust, I found in the bottom of the shell-hole into

which I jumped the lower half of a German soldier in an advanced stage of decomposition. He was complete with boots, trousers and the rest as far as the waist, but his upper parts had been severed as if with a razor and no trace of them remained. A very unpleasant experience; especially as I was being chased by shells and might at any moment experience the same fate as this unknown German. After this I lay low for a time with my incomplete companion, and then made my way to my destination along an old communication trench which I was fortunate enough to strike.

After visiting the 3rd Battalion I walked on up the Carvin Road to within about 500 yards of where our outpost line runs, and then back through Lens to the 173rd Brigade Headquarters for lunch. Lens is so completely ruined that when we first entered we found it impossible for all transport, and men could only make their way over the ruins with difficulty. Now the engineers have cleared the main streets and repaired the roads, but on either side are nothing but piles of debris. Here and there the shattered remains of a concrete fortification, or the twisted iron framework of a factory alone retain some semblance of their original form; of churches or public buildings nothing can be distinguished amid the uniform expanse of ruins.

7th October.

During the night the officer commanding the patrol which was lost yesterday morning crawled back into our lines. He had been wounded in both ankles and had remained hidden in a shell-hole all day. Nothing has been heard of the rest of the patrol, so I am afraid we must assume that they were killed or captured.

A long walk round the line with H. this morning. As we were going through Lens, several shells fell not far from us, and as the third burst amid some ruins, there emerged from beneath them a fat and large French officer dressed in an immaculate blue uniform.

"Messieurs," he shouted, "est-ce que le Boche nous voit ici ?"

We assured him that the Boche could not see us but was harassing the roads along which he thought traffic was likely to pass. The Frenchman then went on to tell us that he had been visiting his house which he had not seen for four years. Poor fellow, the heap of ruins from underneath which he had emerged was all that remained of his home. He walked a while with us, pointing out the places of interest in the town. "This," he said, pointing to one area of bricks and mortar, "is the theatre ; there is the school." A little farther on we came to the church, just distinguishable by a conical heap of masonry where the tower had fallen. I must not forget

the new Town Hall of which he talked with pride, though we could distinguish not one single feature.

We next went on down the Carvin Road and looked at the enemy's position from the top of a ruined cottage. In the foreground was Harnes Fosse standing on a 50-foot eminence, commanding a view over our positions. Adjoining were Harnes Corons—workmen's cottages—which appeared to be little damaged by shell-fire, whereas Loison, a little farther south, has been laid flat, whether by our guns or deliberately by the Boche, I cannot say. Then we made our way along an interminable communication trench, and after a few exciting runs under machine-gun fire across open pieces of ground where the trench was broken, or had never existed, reached the front line in the left sector. The front line is in a deep railway embankment, and as there are plenty of dug-outs the troops are both safe and comfortable.

From the left sector one has a good view of Annay and the great metal works of Pont à Vendin, both of which are in the hands of the Boche. On our way home we stopped to have lunch with the 174th Infantry Brigade, whose Headquarters are at the eastern extremity of Hythe Tunnel. This remarkable tunnel, which is 50 feet underground and ten miles long, was built by the Canadians in 1916 to serve as a communication trench.

12th October.

The Boche is retreating again in front of us. Last night the 173rd Infantry Brigade occupied Harnes and Canal Mazes and captured Loison in face of little opposition. To-day they have gone on and captured Harnes Fosse. The 12th Division on our right are into the Drocourt-Quéant line.

In the evening I began to feel very seedy. I suppose I have got Spanish influenza.

13th October.

As my temperature continued up and Divisional Headquarters are to move forward to-morrow, I was evacuated in the afternoon to a Casualty Clearing Station. I am in a large Nissen hut which holds 25 beds, heated by an open brick fireplace and an occasional stove. All the light we have is provided by two hurricane lamps and three or four candles. Why the lighting arrangements are so inadequate, or how the nurses and doctors can carry on their work efficiently in semi-obscurity, I cannot understand. We have one Sister in the ward by day to do the dressings and two or three orderlies to help, or to do the dirty work. At night one sister assisted by two orderlies looks after two wards. The orderlies are insolent and the sisters not quite so sympathetic as might be expected, I suppose long acquaintance with suffering deadens their sensibilities. There are only

two or three other officers in the ward. One poor fellow, who has a bullet through the chest, looks terribly ill.

14th October.

Much better this morning, despite a disturbed night, for he who was shot through the lung was talking, singing, shouting orders and coughing all the time.

All the patients in the ward except this poor fellow and myself were evacuated by train to the Base at 4 p.m. I should have gone too, had I not taken the precaution of bringing with me a note from the A.D.M.S., asking that I might be retained. During the evening and night the ward filled up with wounded officers, mostly of the 12th Division, which lies on our right. I learnt from them that the advance had reached the Canal, where stiffer resistance was being met. There was only one really bad case among them—a young officer of the 2nd Battalion London Regiment, with a compound fracture of the thigh. He was in great pain and made most piteous outcry until mercifully relieved by a sleeping draught.

16th October.

The A.D.M.S. called for me at noon and took me back to Divisional Headquarters, which are now at Harnes Fosse, where the 173rd Infantry Brigade Headquarters were when I left them a fortnight ago. Our brigades are now ten miles ahead, so to-morrow

we are moving to Montigny, nine miles further east. During the afternoon G. and I motored up to the Headquarters of the 36th Infantry Brigade (12 Div.) at the Henin Liêtard, which place was about 12 miles behind the German lines when I left Divisional Headquarters to go to the C.C.S. on Friday last.

First we traversed miles and miles of ruins marking what were once Lens and Sallaumines. In the former town were several women searching for remnants of their homes, also some little girls hawking sweets. Last time I passed through Lens, I had to dodge Boche shells.

Sallaumines is as completely destroyed as Lens, of which it is a suburb, but a few miles farther on is Billy Montigny, another mining town, in which the houses, though mostly damaged by shell fire, are still standing. A little farther on still is Henin Liètard, in a much better state of preservation, many houses having escaped serious damage. A British band was playing in a bandstand in the Square, but a sudden stop was put to their music by the discharge of a 60-pounder gun which had been brought into action on the western side of the Square.

We found the 36th Infantry Brigade Headquarters installed in a comfortable little château just south of the town, with a pleasant avenue of lime trees leading to it, and a garden which had been lately tended. The furniture within was undamaged, at least what remained

of it, and save for a few notices on the walls there were few signs of enemy occupation. The Germans had, however, placed a leaky gas shell in the cellar, thereby making it uninhabitable. It is very wonderful for us who have lived in holes in the earth for so long to find comfortable human habitations again. There are no civilians left in this part of the world, but from the condition of their dwelling-places they can only have been evacuated recently.

At Courriéres we found the 175th Infantry Brigade also installed in a very comfortable little house. S., the assistant staff captain, was playing the piano when we arrived, and a good tea was laid out on a handsome oak table. Our troops are across the Canal de La Haute Deule beyond Courriéres.

17th October.

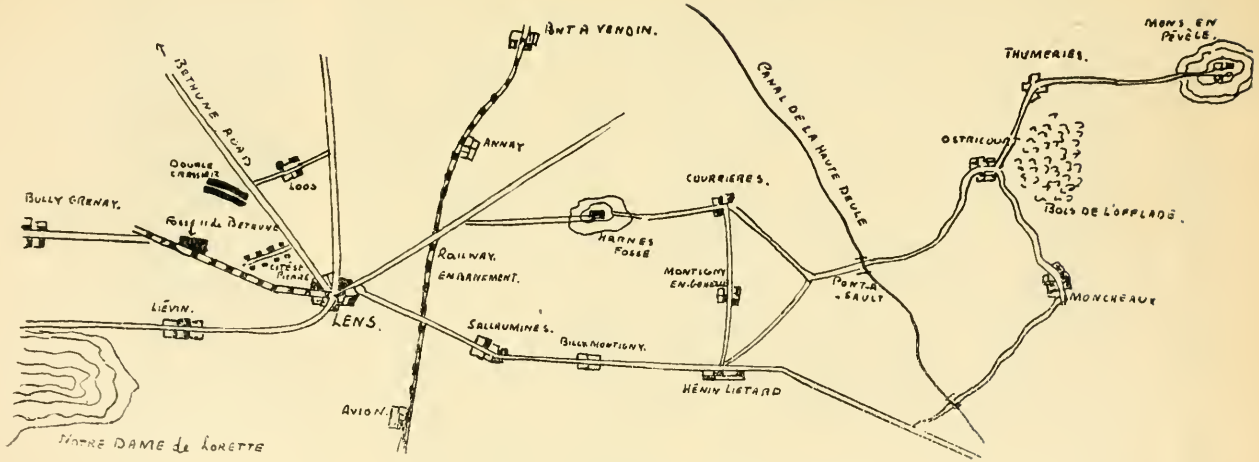
We are moving forward to-day to Montigny. Divisional Headquarters have become a most cumbersome affair to move, as all sorts of persons and impedimenta to which we grew accustomed in stationary warfare are still carried wherever we go. It takes four 3-ton lorries to carry our luggage, and the activities of the Q and A Staff, for the day preceding and the day of the move, are almost entirely absorbed with the problem of transport and accommodation. Nowadays there are between 25 and 30 officers in Divisional Headquarters and more than 100 other

ranks. I do not think such a number of persons is necessary during moving warfare, though they may have been for the highly organized warfare of the trenches. As far as I can make out, we employ a good many more officers and men behind the front than the French. This is one reason why they are able to keep up such a much larger army than ourselves, despite their smaller population. We seem also to employ a colonel where they would employ a sergeant-major.

The Boche has begun to go back very fast on our front, and we are now out of touch with him. Early this morning there were no signs of the enemy between Attiches and Thumeries, and civilians in the latter places waved flags to our airmen as they flew over at a height of 600 feet. Later a message came from the 1st Corps, to say that the Germans are believed to have evacuated Lille last night, as in the streets of this city also civilians had been seen waving tricolour flags by airmen.

Divisional Headquarters opened at Montigny, a little mining village N.W. of Henin Liètard, at noon, but our stay here is not likely to be long, for our leading troops are already 10,000 yards ahead at Thumeries, where they have released 400 civilians.

The 175th Infantry Brigade is on the right, and the 174th Brigade on the left. The 173rd Infantry Brigade is in reserve about Harnes, but is moving forward to-day. Last night our troops were on the line of the Haute Deule



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE ADVANCE FROM LENS, OCTOBER 1918

Canal. At 3.30 p.m. to-day the right brigade had passed Ostricourt, and was half-way through the Bois de L'Offlade, and the left brigade was approaching Thumeries. This is indeed moving warfare. Divisional Headquarters are now 10,000 yards behind our troops, but we are unable to move forward because the corps is 15 miles behind us. The feeding of the troops is also becoming difficult, our horse transport having to draw supplies each day from the Refilling Point at Bully Grenay and carry them 20 odd miles to Battalion transport lines. To add to the fatigue of such a journey, the roads through Lens and Sallaumines are execrable.

At 5.30 came news that the 174th Brigade were established in the Lestrez-Thumeries Road and were pushing on to Mons-en-Pévèle—that village on the isolated hill at which I had so often gazed from Lens. How far away it seemed in those days. In Thumeries, the only inhabited village we have entered so far, the civilians received our troops with great enthusiasm, offering them food and wine, although themselves very short of food.

18th October.

The advance was continued at dawn by the 175th Infantry Brigade on the right and the 174th Infantry Brigade on the left, and by 1 p.m. the patrols of the right brigade were in touch with the enemy at La Broderie and Boulenrieux. Of the left Brigade, the 8th Battalion which

formed the advanced guard, occupied La Bersée at 7.30 a.m. without opposition, and by noon was in touch with the enemy 1,500 yards east of this village. The Mayor of La Bersée had been told by a German officer that they meant to stand on the Scheldt, which is more than probable, as this canalized river forms a strong defensive line, and the Germans like to have water between them and our tanks.

The D.A.P.M. and I had a most interesting ride this morning. We sent our horses on up to Ostricourt, going ourselves in a motor as far as that place. We were delayed for three quarters of an hour at the canal, owing to the pontoon bridge which has replaced the destroyed Pont-à-Sault having broken down. The Canal de La Haute Deule is some 40 yards broad and the banks on both sides are high, so that all transport has to pass down one steep ramp to the pontoons and up another steep ramp the far side, with a right-angled turn on to the bridge and another right-angled turn off it. When I add that a pontoon is only broad enough to take a limbered waggon with a few inches to spare on either side, and that between the wheels and space there is nothing but a balk of timber 4 inches high, the difficulties of such a crossing become apparent. It is a remarkable sight to see field guns and limbers with their teams of six horses swinging on to the bridge, sliding down the plank ramp and, after a few yards on the level, struggling up the other side. Nor was I surprised to hear

that more than one team had disappeared into the Canal during the night; we could actually see one limber and horses lying in the bottom, beneath the water. Ostricourt is undamaged, but the Germans evacuated all civilians about a week before our arrival, and, true to their usual standard of conduct, proceeded to ransack the houses, taking what they could carry and destroying what they could not. Drawers have been emptied, and their contents thrown about the rooms; the very mattresses ripped open to see if they contained wool or hidden money.

Where time has not sufficed for detailed destruction, a hand grenade thrown through the window has wrecked the unhappy French people's homes. One tries to be broad-minded, and to place all the blame for the atrocities which have been committed by the German Army on to its leaders, but it is hard to excuse subordinates who do the foul work of their masters with so good a will. I suppose one should go farther, and assume that the people of Germany have been rendered vicious by the bad up-bringing they have had during the thirty years of the present Kaiser's reign. Ostricourt Church was structurally intact, but the chairs had been thrown all over the place, the vestry looted, and a grenade dump established in one of the aisles.

We had now passed out of the coalfields into a fair country. It was a joy to ride across unscarred fields, showing no signs of war save a

certain neglect in their state of cultivation, and through the Bois de L'Offlade decked as for a feast in the splendid mantle of autumn. The morning opened misty, but gradually the sun drank up the vapour and shone out on a noble autumn landscape. We rode through Moncheux, where there were a few inhabitants, the first I had seen since our advance began, and then climbed up the steep hill to Mons-en-Pévèle. About 500 civilians remained in this village, which is undamaged and in good order. They had hung out from their windows, flags, hidden for four years, and festoons of tricoloured paper flowers are spread across the streets. Only old people and a few young women and children remain ; all the able bodied males from 16-60, and many of the younger women, having been driven off into captivity by the Germans.

These poor people did not greet us with noisy acclamations—four years of German tyranny and starvation have broken their spirits too much for any violent expressions of delight—but there was a look of quiet joy in their faces. Their fields are neglected and all cattle and horses were long since removed by the insatiable Huns, so that they would have starved but for the generous and very efficient help of the United States Relief Committee, which, on the entry of that Power into the war, was administered by the Dutch and Spanish Governments. British soldiers are very kindly in their dealings with the inhabitants ; especi-

ally popular are they with children, with whom they play in a most charming manner. Our national character is certainly most simple and kindly. An intelligent inhabitant told me that German soldiers admit openly that they are beaten and talk with indifference of the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. They return from leave very depressed, saying that their families are starving.

From Mons I rode on two miles to La Bersée, 1,500 yards in front of which our outpost line is established. Several batteries were moving along the road and coming into action in the open fields on either side. Old men, women and children, were standing at the doors of isolated houses and farms, waving to us and watching with the greatest interest the battle which was going on round them. When I reached La Bersée, I saw a sight such as one reads of in stories of the war of 1870. The Headquarters of the 8th Battalion, London Regiment, were established in a house on the western outskirts of the village. Two or three hundred yards farther on, 4.2 howitzer shells were falling near the church at regular intervals of about 20 seconds, while the inhabitants of the village were standing about watching this unusual sight, with as much sangfroid as if it had been a cattle show or a funeral.

I have seldom enjoyed a morning's ride more. Owing to the lack of cultivation, it was possible to canter for miles across open fields. The sun burnishing the silver mist with gold and

lighting up the autumn tints in the woods, the sight of human beings living in undamaged houses and welcoming us as their deliverers, with the extraordinary spectacle of a battle going on amid scenes of so much peace and beauty, combined to form a picture such as few are privileged to see.

19th October.

The enemy resistance weakened considerably yesterday evening, and at 3 a.m. the 8th Battalion, London Regiment (174 Bde.), occupied Wattines. The inhabitants stated that the last Germans had left an hour before. Both the 174th and 175th Brigades continued to advance this morning at dawn, each preceded by an advanced guard of one battalion, with a section each of Field Artillery, machine-guns and engineers. This system of following a retreating enemy with two brigades in line, on a divisional front, each preceded by an advanced guard, seems wasteful. A single regiment of cavalry could do the work which two Infantry Brigades are now doing, whilst the whole division marched quietly behind them in column of route, with half the fatigue to the men that they are now enduring. I think, in view of the enemy's demoralization and lack of reserves on this front, the time has come to take the risk of following him up with a screen of cavalry, while taking three or four of the infantry divisions away to add their weight to the shrewd blows that are

being dealt elsewhere. It would be better still to put a whole cavalry division in here, where resistance is weak and there are no trenches, for they would probably be able to ride right through the enemy and throw his communications into disorder. This, of course, is merely an expression of opinion because, only being able to survey a portion of the front, it would be presumptuous for me to dogmatize.

Divisional Headquarters moved during the day to La Bersée, to a fine old seventeenth-century château, once the home of the Princes of Montmorency, now the property of the Mayor of La Bersée, a rather vulgar old gentleman, a once rich manufacturer of Lille. It is a fine building of brick and stone, whitewashed over, as is usual in this part of the world, with a little turret with extinguisher top at each end. It is surrounded by a moat and stands in a fine park.

I rode from Montigny to La Bersée. It was a grey and misty but none the less enjoyable morning for a ride. I first went to Moncheaux, where Divisional Headquarters were to have been established, only to find that they had moved forward to La Bersée, so I rested in the priest's house for about an hour before riding on. To judge from his books, the old gentleman must have taken an interest in agricultural chemistry. His must have been a peaceful, happy, useful life, before the twentieth-century Huns descended upon the village, where his time was divided between

the care of his parishioners' souls and the improvement of their fields. His house was roomy and comfortable, with a well-kept garden behind, from which a little path led to the vestry door. It had been used by the Germans as an officers' club, and was left in good condition, but as usual, nearly all the furniture had been removed. The church also was in good condition, but the vestry had been rifled, and the sacramental wine drunk. The rest of the village presented the usual sad spectacle of places through which the Boche has passed.

The roads were very congested with transport and guns moving forward, and in many instances the drivers had decorated their horses and vehicles with French and German flags. One or two had even gone so far as to don bowler hats and other quaint articles of civilian attire. An air of rejoicing was abroad ; I fear the reaction will be violent if peace does not come as soon as we all hope and expect.

From Moncheaux I cut across the low, wet fields to La Bersée, passing on the way a few old men and women working at their crops, all of whom paused to wish me good-day. La Bersée was beflagged and gay, and the inhabitants formed happy groups with our men in the streets.

The château, which was the Headquarters of the German Army known as the Souchez Group, has been left in good condition, but

little furniture remains. None the less, there is a grand piano and a pianola in the room which serves as an office. I have a billet in the village, and, luxury of luxuries, a bed with sheets. My hostess is all alone; two weeks ago both her sons were taken away by the Germans and she is very sad.

I found six prisoners captured by the 175th Infantry Brigade waiting to be examined. Two belonged to the 228th Infantry Regiment, 49th Reserve Division, and one N.C.O., and three men to different regiments of the 12th Reserve Division. The men would not say much in front of their sergeant, but after I had sent him out of the room expressed very liberal views on the subject of the war. They were "fed up" and recognized that Germany was beaten. What did they care about the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, so long as they could get back to their homes?

20th October.

The 173rd Infantry Brigade passed through the outposts at 8 a.m., and by 11.30 a.m. the 3rd Battalion, London Regiment, had occupied Planard. By nightfall our patrols were almost through the Bois de Rongy, having met with little opposition.

After lunch G. and I motored to Planard. The scene was most picturesque and animated, groups of inhabitants surrounding our newly-arrived soldiers and, as we passed, old men raised their hats and women and children

smiled a thankful greeting. One fine old Frenchman came forward, and, shaking me by the hand, with a most dramatic gesture exclaimed :

" Merci bien, monsieur. Merci bien de nous avoir delivré de ce cauchemar de quatre ans."

We then went on to visit the picket line on the edge of the Bois de Rongy, and crossing a tiny stream found ourselves at last upon Belgian territory. At the Ferme de la Loge were the company commander and the picket supports. Most of the men were grouped in the kitchen, and whither a little boy, ill with Spanish influenza, who wanted to see the soldiers, had been laid upon cushions stretched upon two chairs. In the next room, with the door open so that he also might see what was going forward, was an old bed-ridden man. Curiosity seems equally strong in age and youth. The farmer's wife was making tea for the soldiers, with whom her daughters were engaged in animated conversation, of which neither party could understand a single word. All this going on in the front line, with nothing between us and the Germans but the sentry groups along the road two or three hundred yards away.

We passed the picket line and walked a while in the forest. In the distance we could hear an occasional burst of rifle or machine-gun fire, where our patrols were in touch with the enemy, but for the rest all was peace and beauty. Tall poplars, graceful willows, rugged

oaks and grey beeches—most glorious of trees —a blaze of crimson, russet and gold. How beautiful the woods are in the autumn, and how I long to be able to walk in them at peace once more.

Calling at the 173rd Brigade Headquarters on our way home, we found two young Frenchmen who had crossed the German lines a few hours previously. They had been evacuated from Libercourt near Dourges by the Germans a fortnight ago, and together with 1,600 other able-bodied males had been marched to Enghien, near Brussels, where they were set to work digging trenches and wiring. They were to have marched on to Brussels in a few days, but managed to escape and made their way back to our lines via Leuze and Tournai. They say that the roads between these two towns are thick with German troops and transport moving eastward. Also that the German soldiers are very much demoralized.

While I was talking to these plucky French lads, a weird-looking German prisoner was brought in. A thin, narrow-chested, pale youth, dressed in a blue uniform, he announced with some pride that he belonged to a Straff-Kompagnie — punishment company — which accounted for his peace-time blue uniform. He added that he had stolen a field grey overcoat and made his way over to our lines, as he could no longer endure the treatment he was receiving. He had been called up for service in the spring of 1917, but having refused

to fight had been put into the 27th punishment company, in which were 350 men, all of whom had refused to go into action. He alleged that his reason for not wanting to fight was because he liked the English too well. His family came from Hanover and had fought for the British at Fontenoy and Waterloo; was it to be expected that he would now turn against us? A plausible youth, but I rather fancy that, had he surrendered to the French, his family would have belonged to Alsace-Lorraine, and that cowardice alone had given him strength to endure the torture of a punishment company for two years rather than fight. He had recently been working on defences in front of Tournai.

21st October.

Our troops went forward at dawn and again met with little opposition. By early afternoon the 173rd Infantry Brigade on the left had passed through Rongy, Lesdain, and reached the Scheldt Canal at Blèharies. The 175th Infantry Brigade on the right were held up in front of Fort Maulde at the Censée de Choques —"Censée" being the local name for a large farm.

So the astonishing retreat goes on. This morning, on the road, I met a party of 40 or 50 Belgian men in the prime of life who, having been ordered by the Germans to report for evacuation a few days previously, had taken to the fields and woods.

This afternoon Divisional Headquarters were established in a farm at Mouchin. I have my billet in an inn. I drank coffee with the good lady and her husband, who cannot find words to express their gratitude at being delivered from the Boche. They had the usual sad stories of spoliation and ill-treatment to tell; everything of value having been taken from them, down to the wool in their mattresses. Cattle had been driven off, corn destroyed, haystacks burnt, and now we have to feed most of these people; a serious consideration for an Army on the move.

After lunch Colonel D. (G.S.O. I) and I motored to Howardries and walked thence through the Bois de Rongy to the village of that name, which stands on a hill about 1½ miles from the canal. The woods are wonderful; tall, straight trees rising from a bed of red bracken. When we arrived at Rongy, troops of the 173rd Infantry Brigade were marching into the village, led by their bands playing the "Marseillaise," and all the inhabitants had turned out to give them a heart-felt welcome. The windows were gay with flags, and many women were weeping with joy of their deliverance. A group of Grey Sisters, standing by the church which the Germans had blown up, so far forgot their usual decorum as to wave and smile a greeting to our men.

Meanwhile, the Germans were shelling all the approaches to the village, and owing to the

woods which surround it the shells made an extraordinarily loud report. Indeed, a shell falling a quarter of a mile away sounded as if it had burst in the next street; 500 feet overhead one of our aeroplanes was getting heavily fired at, and the Archies made a most unpleasant crash as they burst into black smoke balls. From the direction of Fort Maulde came the sound of machine-gun fire where the 175th Brigade were engaged with the enemy. All these sounds of war, mingled with the strains of the "Marseillaise" and the cheers of the people, rendered the scene most dramatic.

We saw great numbers of young Frenchmen and Belgians, who had escaped from the Germans, marching down the roads with colours in their caps singing for joy; also two women who had walked all the way from Ath.

22nd October.

Last night orders were received for the division to force the passage of the canal, and establish the line Sart Collin-Rœux-Flines about two miles the other side. The 173rd Infantry Brigade were ordered accordingly to bridge the canal and force a passage. The 175th Brigade on the right could not participate in the operation, as they were still held up at some distance from the Escaut by that formidable obstacle—Fort Maulde. The Royal Engineers completed a footbridge during the night—no mean feat, as the canal is 40 yards broad and they were under shell fire all the

time—and, about 3 a.m., a platoon of the 2nd Battalion London Regiment managed to slip across in the darkness. The commanding officer very wisely did not adventure any more men on so perilous and forlorn an enterprise. The unfortunate platoon found itself at dawn clinging on to the far bank, subjected to overwhelming machine-gun fire and with difficulty recrossed the Canal with the loss of nine men, of whom two were killed.

I forgot to mention that when I was in Rongy yesterday, a young lady of some personal, if over buxom attractions, Mlle. L. D. . . of the Rue du Ponceau, handed to me a bundle of agent's reports written with specially prepared ink upon very thin, almost tissue paper. A Belgian clerk, who was a friend of hers, had given the papers to her the day before our arrival, with the injunction to hand them to the first British soldier she should see. She would give me no further information about the agent, beyond the fact that he had been acting as a spy since the beginning of war and had now gone further back into Belgium to continue his labours. The reports proved, on examination, to give detailed information about the fortifications built by the Germans round Tournai. I think a man who acts as a spy in the zone of a hostile army, or in an enemy country, must be possessed of the highest form of courage.

The Germans started to shell the line of the

canal heavily this morning with all calibres of guns and howitzers, and it became necessary to evacuate the inhabitants of Blèharies and Rongy. It was raining hard, and down the road ankle deep in mud, wet to the skin, cold, hungry, and altogether miserable went the unhappy inhabitants. Yesterday they were welcoming us as their deliverers, to-day their homes are being laid in ruins, and they are outcasts with nowhere to lay their heads. All the afternoon and late into the night these unfortunates continued to pour into Mouchin. Most of them were afoot and were hauling what they had been able to save of their household goods in carts or waggons. Some of the women were carrying little children on their backs, others were wheeling them in barrows. One or two waggon loads came by drawn by horses so weak and emaciated that they could hardly stand, for the Germans have left behind few beasts that could be of any service to their owners. One waggon was drawn by a horse and a fine young bull, though how the Germans came to overlook so useful an animal I cannot imagine. The more aged and infirm were carried in our G.S. waggons and the sick as far as possible in ambulance cars. M., The D.A.Q.M.G., stood at the door of the "Q" mess and handed biscuits or bread to these unfortunates as they passed, and British soldiers carried the old people's burdens and cheered them with many a kind word of encouragement. As

Mouchin is already nearly full of men of the 15th Division, these unhappy people had to be lodged in barns, and when these proved insufficient we had to commandeer the church. The local people were rather shocked, but I think God will deem His House has seldom been used for a better purpose.

23rd October.

This morning I joined the 175th Infantry Brigade, of which my brother Percy is Brigade-Major. I am to replace the intelligence officer, who is on leave. Their Headquarters are in the Château de Rongy, a late seventeenth or early eighteenth century house, belonging to la Comtesse de Rouvrée, an old lady of 75. It is of red brick faced with stone, of the early Georgian style—if such a term can be applied to a Belgian building—with a high pitched slate roof. It stands in a clearing on the eastern edge of the Bois de Rongy and, together with its outbuildings and extensive kitchen garden, is surrounded by a picturesque but stagnant moat. On three sides it is approached by splendid avenues. On the east a double avenue of plane-trees, on the south of noble beeches—some of which have been wantonly cut down by the Germans—while on the west a ride bordered by limes leads deep into the forest. In the garden are some dahlias, the first flowers I have seen since leaving England four months ago.

Our enjoyment of the beauty of the château

in the golden forest was rather spoilt this morning by the arrival of many shells—high explosive mixed with laughing gas—which caused us all to sneeze exceedingly. In the middle of the bombardment, Colonel McN.'s horse came cantering in so badly wounded that it had to be shot. We feared at first that the Colonel might have been killed, but it turned out that he and the divisional commander had just dismounted at the Headquarters of 173rd Infantry Brigade, when a shell fell and wounded two of their horses.

In the afternoon Percy and I walked round the outpost line. From the Censée de Choques, an old moated farm, we had a fine view of Fort Maulde which is holding up our advance. It is an old-fashioned fort in the style of Vauban, and, standing as it does on a solitary eminence from which it commands the country-side for miles around, presents a very formidable obstacle. Civilians are still living in Rue Dombrée and Fresnoy, through which villages our outpost line actually runs. They are in consequence subjected to considerable shell-fire, and it made us feel rather foolish as we walked down the street in steel helmets with gas masks at the alert, to meet two young bareheaded girls walking arm in arm, and to see children playing on the doorsteps. There is a young woman in the village who fires one of our 18-pounder guns. Her husband was carried off by the Germans, and as the gunners have told her that each round kills at least ten of the

beastly Boches she thinks she is having a fine revenge.

25th October.

A number of explosions occurred behind the enemy's lines this morning, and early in the afternoon our observers reported that the observation tower in Fort Maulde had been blown up. These are probably signs that the Germans are going back again to-night. After lunch Percy and I visited the 12th Battalion of the London Regiment at Rumegies, which came in for some heavy shelling by 5.9 in. howitzers early this morning. As the village is crowded with refugees, it is remarkable that there were no casualties among civilians, though about 15 men of the 12th London Regiment were killed and wounded.

The fate of these refugees is very sad. Homeless and almost foodless, they stand apathetically about the streets, until a shell drives them to the nearest cellar, or induces them to pack up their hand carts and move further west in search of a safer refuge. Their gratitude to us when we give them food and ask no money in return is most touching, and I have arranged that each battalion in the brigade shall organise a soup kitchen for their relief. For four years they have been robbed and down-trodden by the Germans, who have commandeered their crops and belongings, giving in return requisition notes which they compelled the local banks to

honour. These notes have become currency, and have circulated at a greatly depreciated value, although in reality they have no value whatsoever, because they are not redeemable. The Germans have also issued many millions of francs worth of false bank notes, in return for the real notes which they carried off for their own use.

The French peasants, who do not make much use of banks, always used to keep a considerable amount of gold and silver in their homes. This they buried in the fields when the Germans invaded the land. They are now digging up their coins and can be seen cleaning and drying them in front of their fires.

Despite their brutality, I fear that a good many women have been living with German soldiers and the Mayor of La Bersée told me there were 28 German babies in the village.

About 10 p.m. the sky was lighted up by the glare of a tremendous conflagration; the Germans had fired the town of Maulde.

26th October.

Early this morning we learnt that the Germans had evacuated Fort Maulde and that our troops were established along the banks of the canal on the whole divisional front, but, as all attempts of the 173rd Brigade to cross at Espain were frustrated by heavy artillery and trench mortar fire, it soon became apparent that the Germans meant to hold

on to the eastern bank of the canal. W. and I walked up to Fort Maulde during the morning and found it a most formidable obstacle. A gently sloping glacis leads up to a ditch 20 feet deep and as many broad, on the other side of which a vertical wall of masonry and earth rises to a height of about 80 feet. No artillery but howitzers of the heaviest calibre would have any effect on this fort, and any troops who attacked before it had been laid in ruins would have been annihilated by machine-gun fire as they crossed the glacis.

The Germans had blown up the drawbridge, but, being of an inquisitive turn of mind, I decided to try and enter the fort across its wreckage. I scrambled down the side, and finally jumped about five feet on to the debris, only to find myself on top of a dump of 30 or 40 leaking gas shells. The smell of mustard gas was very strong, so I lost no time in clambering out of the ditch by the way I had come down, but in my haste lost my footing and slipped back more than once. I got a good deal of mustard gas on to my hands, and my lungs had a generous dose of the fumes, but beyond feeling very tired and slack this evening I suffered no ill effects. Our retreat from Fort Maulde was hastened by the arrival of some 77m.m. shells, fired at point blank range from the other side of the canal, so that the discharge of the gun and the sound of the explosion sounded practically simultaneous.

Our ambulances have to deal with a large

number of sick civilians, who have to be accommodated in casualty clearing stations, and ultimately evacuated to some civilian hospitals. There are none of these, at present, within 50 miles, but I believe one is to be opened in Lille within a few days. There is a lot of influenza, culminating in pneumonia. At Auchy the Germans accommodated a convoy of deportees in a hospital from which they had just evacuated soldiers suffering from this disease. Many of these unhappy people, underfed and miserable as they were, contracted influenza. One young girl was brought into the field ambulance last night suffering from double pneumonia; both her brothers, who were also lodged in the German hospital, had died of the same illness during the past few days.

At Lecelles, during the advance of the 36th Infantry Brigade (12th Division), the Germans fired with a machine-gun from a distance of a few hundred yards on a woman who was leading a little child towards our lines. The woman was killed, but a sergeant of the Fusiliers managed to seize the child and roll with it into a ditch. The Germans continued to fire on him while he was performing this act of humanity, and it was not until after dark that he was able to emerge with his little charge. These are the people who are talking of entering the "League of Nations," whatever that may be.

28th October.

The autumn tints are deepening and the sunlight in the woods this morning is very beautiful. The trees are planted close, so that their trunks grow bare of branches straight towards the light. The delicate poplars are almost bare of leaves, but the stately beeches are crowned with a canopy of golden foliage, and the sturdy oaks which have a longer life, are only just tinged with russet. Everywhere the leaves are falling in showers, and the forest is full of whispers.

Close to the château is a little clearing traversed by dykes at right angles in the form of a cross. The water is covered with pale green weed, burnished silver in the sunlight, and beside it grow crimson reeds. This little grove is ringed about with young trees crowned with brilliant plume-like foliage, and evergreens add their vivid green to the gamut of colour.

It is a fairy spot, and one which I love to frequent.

To-night when a German bombing aeroplane approached the château, the peacocks which roost in the chestnut-tree outside the front door set up a most doleful wailing. This is curious, because shell-fire leaves them unmoved. I suppose they realized that some awful monster had invaded their natural element.

31st October.

We are still in our château and, as the Brigade is out of the line, we are leading a life which would be altogether pleasant, did not the Germans each night drop a few shells unpleasantly near to our Headquarters. Percy is ill with a slight attack of influenza, so I have to ride out with the General in the mornings to see the units training.

These are great times. Yesterday came the news that Austria-Hungary had asked for a separate peace; to-day we hear that an Armistice has been concluded with Turkey. Will the Germans, realizing the hopelessness of their situation, agree to our Armistice conditions? I think they will. The military party may be able to maintain itself in power a little longer and try a fight to a finish, but Ludendorff's fall looks as if the military party's star was in the descendent. None of us can think or talk of anything but the peace which may come any day. At the worst, Germany cannot prolong the war for more than a few months, now that we can invade her through Austria.

1st November.

The 5th Army Commander, General Birdwood of Anzac fame, visited the brigade this morning and watched the troops training. He is a very small man with a pleasant, kindly face, and his uniform was the oldest and shabbiest imaginable. Old corduroy breeches, frayed and

darned about the knees, a very old and short tunic, and an old-fashioned black peaked cap with a dirty khaki cover. With him was his A.M.S., Major Churchill, brother of Winston Churchill. The Army Commander made himself very pleasant to every one, and it was easy to understand his popularity with the Australians, for his manners are as simple and unassuming as his clothes.

This afternoon the division lent us a car, and the General, C., Percy and I, motored into Lille. The country through which we passed was flat and uninteresting; the villages squalid, the inhabitants equally so. About five miles from the city we passed the Fort de Singhien, and a little further on the old battery, for Lille is surrounded by a perimeter of ancient forts. We approached the town through the suburb of Hellemines, which presents a very depressing spectacle. Long, dirty streets of new and ugly houses, in the decoration of which coloured tiles predominate, with most of the windows boarded up; for the Germans blew up the railway which runs through Hellemines. A few old men and some women and children stood at the doors listlessly watching the British troops who swarm in the streets. These unhappy people look ill, starved and cowed; the appearance of the children, with their pale, pinched, feverish little faces, is particularly affecting. Four years of German tyranny are stamped indelibly on the countenances of the inhabitants.

The Germans having destroyed the bridge which carries the road across the railway, we had to make a detour across the lines and thence over a wooden bridge, through the Port D'Arras into Lille ; for the city is surrounded by ramparts and a deep ditch.

Lille is a fine city, with well laid out, broad, straight streets and boulevards leading to spacious squares surrounded by noble buildings. Most of the shops, and many of the houses are shut up, and absolute silence reigns in the streets, where not a single vehicle, other than an occasional British military car, passes. Even the footsteps of the few people who prowl about the boulevards are deadened by the carpet of unswept leaves.

Such shops as remain open contain little but worthless gewgaws for sale : a few hats of antiquated fashion, some post cards, a bottle or two of wine, coffee made from rye, some unnatural looking cakes, the size of half a crown and priced at two francs—that is all.

There is a great preponderance of old people, because the Germans removed most of the young of both sexes to work in their factories. We saw an occasional French officer or soldier walking arm in arm with their wives, from whom they had been separated for more than four years, but even these women seemed unable to throw off their careworn expression. The people have lost their natural volubility, and one sees little gesticulation.

The life of this great city of over a quarter

of a million souls is suspended ; the factories are silent and deserted, the Germans having carried off most of the machinery ; commerce is at a standstill, trade has ceased. There is no work to be done, and, even if there was, the ill-nourished and sickly inhabitants have hardly sufficient energy left to do it. The only sign of animation that we saw was in the Grande Place, where hawkers were selling to-day's Paris papers.

Fortunately the city is more or less intact, so that life will probably slowly regain its normal course. The railway stations have been blown up, and here and there some buildings demolished by bombs, shells or fire. The beautiful four-aisled cathedral has escaped all damage, though, by some strange chance, the buildings immediately surrounding it have been demolished.

2nd–4th November.

Quiet days. We are all anxiously waiting to hear whether Germany will accept the Armistice conditions or not and, having little to do, argue about the question *ad nauseam*, passing for ever round the vicious circle of hope and doubt. Personally, I believe that Germany is in such a desperate condition that she will accept any terms we may impose.

The enemy's artillery has been unpleasantly active recently. At 2 o'clock this morning they opened a ten minutes' intense bombardment on the château, during the course of

which a 4.2 inch shell burst against a plane tree just outside the front door, on a level with my bedroom window. I wasted no time in executing a strategic retreat to the General's room on the ground floor, where I found that most of the staff had already assembled. The poor old countess, who sleeps in the next room but one to me, had all her windows broken and was nearly blown out of bed. She was very alarmed and had to be carried down to the cellar, where she spent the rest of the night; a by no means pleasant experience at her time of life. Not being able to understand the principles of modern artillery, she cannot be brought to believe that these shells are fired from guns situated two or three miles away, the other side of the canal, but thinks that the Germans creep up to the château at night and throw bombs at it. She considers us awful cowards, because we remain in bed, or retire to the cellars, instead of trying to drive away the German bombers.

The latest German beastliness is to place beside a road what purports to be a grave, with a cross commemorating "Ein unbekannter Soldat." In reality the grave conceals the entrance to a mine, fitted with a time fuze.

5th November.

This evening comes the welcome news that the 1st, 3rd and 4th British, the 1st French and the 1st American Armies have attacked, and are making good progress. We have also

received details of the terms of the Armistice concluded with Austria-Hungary, which amount to a virtual surrender at discretion.

6th November.

During the past twenty-four hours the German artillery has been scattering gas and high explosive shells indiscriminately over the whole area. Last night half a dozen 5.9 inch shells fell in a meadow a couple of hundred yards from our château, and at tea-time to-day we were driven to earth in the cellar by a brief but intense bombardment. I expect this artillery activity masks a retirement on this front.

Yesterday the German delegates left Berlin for the West to receive our Armistice terms. To-day we hear that the American attack on the Meuse is developing into a great victory, so if the delegates have plenary powers the Armistice ought to be signed in a day or two. Meanwhile I have never minded shell-fire so much before, a feeling which is shared by my companions. I suppose the desire to live has tremendously increased now that Peace is in sight.

7th November.

At 2 a.m. the duty clerk woke me up with a telegram saying that the German delegates had crossed the French lines near Haudroye between 9 and 10 p.m., and that the crews of the battleships *Kaiser* and *Schleswig* had

mutinied, killed 20 of their officers and hoisted the red flag. Infantry sent to repress the revolt had joined the mutineers. Later came news that the Americans had occupied that part of the town of Sedan which lies west of the Meuse, thus virtually cutting the German Army in two, because between the right and left wings is the bastion of the Ardennes. The French also continue to advance between the Sambre and the Oise, capturing guns, *materiel* and men. The signing of the Armistice becomes doubly sure.

8th November.

As it was apparent last night that the enemy was retiring in front of us, the 9th and 10th Battalions of the London Regiment were moved to Maulde to-day, with a view to crossing the canal to-morrow morning. The 12th Battalion was placed in reserve at Quesnoy.

9th November.

During the night we heard that Erzberger had transmitted the Allies' Armistice terms to German G.H.Q. at Spa, requesting an answer by 11 a.m. on Monday. Soldiers' and sailors' Councils have taken possession of Hamburg, Bremen, Kiel and Hanover.

Brigade Headquarters left the château at 9 a.m. and marched to Maulde. The 9th Battalion London Regiment, which formed the advanced guard, crossed the Scheldt at dawn; Brigade Headquarters at the head of the main body at 10 a.m.

After that we had to cross the Mons-Condé Canal, and to proceed along the tow-path as far as Mortagne, owing to the road being flooded. Mortagne has been badly shelled from time to time and the inhabitants have been evacuated, a single old woman remaining among the ruins. Thence we marched via Flines to Legis, where we halted for an hour for lunch.

Our long range harassing fire seems to have been accurate, for there are large shell-holes all along the roads, especially near the exits and entrances of villages, and more than one shattered limber bears testimony to its efficiency. The Germans having blown craters at every cross-roads, destroyed bridges, and blocked culverts, so that the roads are under water in places, our progress was slow and difficult. From Legis we marched to Wiers, a pleasant little town unscarred by war and full of inhabitants, while our three battalions are billeting to-night in the town of Peruwelz, a few miles farther on. As we entered Wiers girls rushed out, covered the soldiers with flowers, kissed them and walked arm in arm in the ranks; old men, women and children crowded round the band cheering and singing; nearly every house displayed a flag, hidden for four years against the coming of freedom.

Our Headquarters are established in a nice little house belonging to a printer, and words cannot describe the hospitality and gratitude of our hosts. They have dug up some wine

from the garden, and surround us with blessings and attentions. They have even given up their beds and placed everything that they own at our disposal. After dinner the old printer played "God Save the King" and the "Brabançonne," amid the unrestrained enthusiasm of many neighbours, who had gathered in the kitchen to celebrate this wonderful day.

The people tell us that the Germans are much demoralized and officers used to go from house to house trying to buy food to send home to their families. They cannot get over our fine horses and the smart and healthy appearance of our troops.

10th November.

Owing to the state of the roads our supply waggons with food for consumption to-morrow did not get in until midnight. At 7 a.m. they had to start back again to Maulde, 15 miles away, there to refill and return again with the day after to-morrow's supplies. To Maulde supplies are brought by lorry from railhead at Lille 40 miles away. The lorries have thus to do 80 miles a day and the horse transport thirty over very bad roads. If we continue to advance at this rate we shall not be able to get up food for the troops.

The 12th Battalion passed through the outposts at 7 a.m., the main body crossed the bridge at Peruwelz an hour later, and to get to the head of the column by this time Brigade

Headquarters had to leave Wiers at 6.30 a.m. We could not have had a better day for our march. When we started the stars were still shining, and then the red sun came over the horizon revealing a world white with frost. As each battalion, led by its band, marched off from the square at Peruwelz, yesterday's scenes of enthusiasm were repeated.

Our route was La Boiterie-Basècles-Quevaucamp-Stambruges-Ecarcheries. At La Boiterie, where I had dismounted to write an order, an old woman ran out of her cottage and forced me to drink a cup of hot goat's milk. In the square at Basècles, where we halted for ten minutes, I read to the people who were coming out of church a rough translation of the telegram announcing the Kaiser's abdication and the revolution in Germany. When I told them in conclusion that the Armistice would almost certainly be signed to-morrow, I was nearly smothered by enthusiastic Belgians who wanted to shake my hand or kiss me.

Everywhere we had chrysanthemums, the only flowers of the season, showered upon us. N. . . . , our Belgian interpreter, rode into Basècles covered with flowers, a large bouquet in each hand, surrounded by a huge and dancing crowd, looking like victorious Bacchus returning from India. When a young woman was about to hand him a bunch of flowers, a voice in the crowd cried: "Monsieur, n'acceptez pas des fleurs d'une femme qui

s'est couchée avec des Boches." A great commotion ensued, half the crowd siding with the woman and half against her.

At Quevaucamp a girl of the peasant class placed herself beside me at the head of the column and recounted as we marched along the delinquences of her more frail sisters. Her own sister-in-law had been associating with German soldiers while her husband was a prisoner in Germany, and was now in hospital at Mons as a result of her evil conduct. All this was told in the most naïve and matter-of-fact way, and my young companion ended by asking quite seriously whether the British army could arrange to have all these women shot.

At Stambruges I found Percy and the General installed in a comfortable house drinking coffee and cognac with the owner. I wasted no time in joining them.

We halted for about an hour during which time our host served us with more cognac and some excellent vegetable soup and then the General and I rode on to Ecarcheries, passing on the way in the forest of Stambruges the most magnificent avenue of beeches that I have ever seen. In our excitement—for who could be calm on such a day as this?—we got well ahead of the outposts of the Brigade on our left which had not kept pace with our advance, and first became aware of our situation when we stopped by an old man working in a field, who told us that the Germans were still in a village only 1000 yards away.

At Ecarcheries we lodged in a handsome house belonging to Madame Vivier, widow of a rich timber merchant, who invited the General and me into her dining-room to drink a bottle of Burgundy, freshly dug up from the garden, and to eat a sort of pancake and jam. With her was a charming old French gentleman, Monsieur Petit, Conseiller-Générale du Nord, who had recently been evacuated from Solesme, as well as his notary. We drank to victory and to the dead, the old man giving thanks to God that he had been spared to see the coming of Peace.

Voices are even rising from the grave to accuse the Germans. To-day the Mayor of Câtelet (Aisne), Monsieur Gode by name, who was evacuated some time ago by the Germans to Neufmaison, a little village which our advanced guard entered this morning, handed to the officer commanding the 12th Battalion of the London Regiment, the last letters of six British soldiers who were shot by the Germans at Le Câtelet on the 22nd May, 1916. These poor fellows, who became separated from their units in August, 1914, remained hiding in villages near Le Câtelet until 22nd May, 1916, when they were forced by privation to surrender themselves to the Germans. They were shot as spies the same day by order of Major Evers, town commandant of Le Câtelet.

As Staff Captain, these letters were forwarded to me. Most of the men belonged to Irish Regiments and their letters were so

illiterate as to be hardly decipherable. One man had scrawled, over and over again, on two sheets of paper the words:

"Darling wife and children. Brave British soldier. Not afraid die." Robert Digby, of the 37th (Hampshire Regiment), had written the following brave and noble letter to his mother:

"Dear Mother,

"Sad news for you. I surrendered to the German authorities on the 22nd May, 1916. I have been hiding since the 2nd September, 1914, in the village of Villeret. Lost my army on the 27th August, 1914, after having been wounded in the left forearm at Villers not far from here. I went to the hospital to have it attended to and in the meantime my army retired. Misfortunate. I have just received my verdict and am not disappointed as it is what I expected from them. Condemned to death to be shot at 10.5 p.m. this evening. Be brave and do not let this trouble you too much as I die happy and contented for my King and Country. Give a farewell kiss to my brother Thomas and my darling sister Flo. Good-bye. God bless you and render you happy in your old days. The last dying wish of your son.

"Robert Digby.
"*37th Regiment.*"

Monsieur Gode, to whom these letters were

given by the priest who attended those of the men who were Roman Catholics, had kept them hidden for a year and a half. Even when evacuated by the Germans, he had secreted on his person letters, which would probably have led to his being shot, had they been discovered. I believe that Robert Digby and his companions were in plain clothes when they surrendered, and, according to the Hague Convention, soldiers who are engaged behind are the enemy's lines in plain clothes as spies liable to be shot. But what ground had the Germans for suspecting Robert Digby and his unhappy pals, who had been hiding miserably in cellars for over two years, of spying ?

11th November.

At 10 a.m. we received a telegram saying that hostility would cease at 11.30 a.m. The news was immediately conveyed to the troops and received by them with silent relief. A squadron of Lancers in Belœil, to whom the news was read by their commanding officer, raised a cheer, and one of the men kicked his steel helmet about the road, which made a small Belgian boy laugh until he nearly choked; but for the most part there were no noisy demonstrations. Now that the fighting is over a feeling of intense weariness has come upon me. I long to sleep for hours and hours, knowing that I shall not have to awake again to the realities of the war.

I think the troops are impressed by the

solemnity of this day, and realize how sad a one it is for those whose well-beloved will return no more ; and we who have been engaged in the grim work of destruction for so long know how much rebuilding this old Europe of ours will need.

13th November.

To-day Brigade Headquarters and the 9th and 12th Battalions moved to Stambruges, as accommodation is better in that little town. We are comfortably billeted in the Mayor's house.

This evening a Belgian civilian came in from Brussels. He says that despite the presence of German troops, the inhabitants have their flags out and are openly rejoicing. Crowds parade the streets singing the "Brabançonne" ; the German Army has become a mob ; many of the soldiers wear Belgian flags in their buttonholes ; all have torn the cockade bearing the State colours from their caps, and substituted a red cockade. Officers have had their epaulettes torn off, and are sometimes beaten by their men. Rifles, bicycles, and other articles of military equipment are being sold for a few francs to civilians.

We had a very successful service of Thanksgiving at 10.30 this morning, in which I induced the Free Church chaplain to take part. He is a rough looking diamond, but preached a sermon so eloquent that the commonness of his delivery hardly detracted from its beauty.

After lunch, news flew round the village that a Belgian soldier on leave was approaching from the direction of Quevaucamp. Most of the village turned out to meet him, led by the local brass band, whose instruments had only a few days before been routed out from their various places of concealment. He made his entrance arm in arm with his father, followed by a large crowd, and the band playing the "Brabançonne" in a very creditable manner. Just opposite our Headquarters his old mother rushed out of her cottage and embraced him; a very touching scene.

16th November.

This afternoon Percy, M., and I, having borrowed three ancient guns and about twenty cartridges from various local sportsmen, had a shoot in the Forêt de Belœil. We took four servants to act as beaters, under the supervision of one of the Prince de Ligne's keepers, but there were few pheasants to be seen, the Boche having shot most of them and practically all the deer. Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria used Belœil as a shooting-box, and one of his favourite amusements was to massacre game at night by the light of a powerful electric arc lamp. I got one pheasant and two hares, Percy two rabbits, and M. nil.

The Mayor dined with us, bringing with him Burgundy, champagne, cognac and Schiedam, so we made right merry; but after dinner my spirits were sadly dashed, by finding on my

desk a message ordering me to proceed to the 9th Battalion Norfolk Regiment, 6th Division, "forthwith." An explanatory letter from G.H.Q. stated that my name had been placed on the 4th Army's list of prospective general staff officers, and that, as I was an artillery officer, I was to be attached to an infantry battalion, in order to gain experience of infantry work. I think this is a very excellent principle, but strongly resent its particular application to myself.

17th November.

After lunch I rode over to the Prince de Ligne's beautiful old château at Belœil to say good-bye to the divisional commander, who thanked me very warmly for my services to the 58th Division. My Brigadier had also some kind remarks to make after dinner, and did his best to have me retained, but all to no avail.

18th November.

This morning I said good-bye to my friends in the 175th Infantry Brigade with a heavy heart. It is always sad to part from friends, particularly friends with whom one has lived through great events. While waiting for the car that was to take me to Lille, I saw two Cavalry Brigades pass through the village—the advanced troops of the 2nd Army beginning their march to the Rhine.

After a bitterly cold drive in an open car, the Senior Supply officer, who appeared to be

devoid of that courtesy which one always finds in the front line, dumped me and my kit at Fretin, about twelve miles from Lille; and I had to shiver in the wind from 2 till 5.30 p.m., when I found a post lorry that was going on to the town. My troubles were not over, for at the last moment the lorry had to go to the station and load up a mail. So I stood about in the railway yard for another hour and a half, taking my share of warmth from a brazier, and watching with impatience the elaborate process of shunting which took place before the truck containing the mails arrived opposite the lorries. Finally, about 8.30 p.m., my servant and I arrived, cold, hungry and tired, at the Divisional Reception Camp in a school at the Porte des Postes, Lille. Here I found my friend T., the adjutant, who gave me a good dinner and found me a comfortable billet. His was the first face I saw when I joined the 58th Division, and his was to be the last I saw when leaving it. Right glad I was to join, and right sad I am to leave a division where I have been so happy, to set forth into the blue on a mission which can be productive of no good now that the war is over.

Travelling in France is not pleasant in these days, as one is often four or five days on the way from the base to a unit without any proper food. At Fretin I met three officers and 300 men who had been waiting, without proper rations or shelter for three days, for transport to take them to their division.

19th November.

At the 5th Army Headquarters in Lille I learned that the 6th Division is in the 4th Army at Bohain, near Le Cateau. To get there, I have to go back to Etaples, and take a train thence to Cambrai.

Lille has woken up considerably since I was here with General C. and Percy three weeks ago. There is more life and movement in the streets, but the people still look cold and half starved, and one encounters some awful smells.

20th November.

Took the train at the Porte des Postes station, or rather what remains of it, at 9.20 a.m., and began a very slow and tedious journey in a dilapidated and filthy old third-class coach, with most of the windows broken and several of the doors missing. We passed La Bassée, or rather, its mutilated ruins—a scene of awful desolation—and Béthune, which is destroyed beyond possibility of habitation. Indeed, for several hours we were crawling slowly through country as badly devastated as any that I have seen. On the way a rather pretty French lady, dressed as a nurse, joined the train, and diverted us by walking from carriage to carriage along the footboard. Beyond St. Pol the journey became slower and slower. Night set in about half-past four and thereafter we sat shivering in total darkness. About 6 p.m., a thick mist arose and

the speed of our train was further reduced to some four miles an hour with frequent halts. At 8.0 p.m., we had only reached Montreuil, where G.H.Q. is situated, and being cold, tired, hungry, and thoroughly fed up, I got out, and went with a French interpreter to a little inn opposite the station, where I had an excellent meal of soup, cutlets, chipped potatoes, and Burgundy, afterwards passing a comfortable night in a warm bed.

21st November.

Montreuil is a quiet, old, insanitary, French town, surrounded by an ancient wall, and standing most picturesquely on the top of a hill. The offices of G.H.Q. are mostly in the Ecole Militaire. What a gloomy life it must be sitting in a stuffy office all day in this stagnant place, miles and miles away from the front.

I caught the 11 a.m. civilian train to Etaples, where I learned from the R.T.O. that my train would leave next morning at 9 a.m., so I put up at the officers' club close to No. 9 Rest Camp. Very comfortable, though crowded, and the food excellent. I believe it was founded by a North Country ship-owner in memory of his son, and it must be a consolation to him to know how many young officers have been made comfortable there, during those few anxious days they have had to spend at the base before proceeding to the front.

22nd November.

I reported to the R.T.O. at New Sidings at 8.30 a.m., to be told that I had to proceed at 9.30 by train to Vaux Andigny, not far from Le Câteau. There was a great crowd of officers and men waiting for different trains, and no one to direct us. I ran about with several officers trying to find our train, but we met with no success until 11 a.m., when we managed to wedge ourselves into a dreadful third-class coach, the floor and seats of which were in such a disgusting condition that I had to get a broom and sweep the seats before we could sit down.

Then some one spotted a first-class coach on another siding, so there was a rush to loot the cushions in order to make our carriage more comfortable. No sooner had the cushions been removed than this first-class coach was shunted on to our train, when there was another rush to secure seats in it. I was lucky enough to be one of eight officers in a compartment with the doors and windows intact, which is more than can be said for most of the others. But now, alas, we were without cushions ! So I made my way back to the third-class coach and, while two officers were quarrelling almost to the point of blows over a cushion, managed to possess myself of it unnoticed by either of them.

The train did not start until 11 a.m., and then only went at a snail's pace, stopping out-

side nearly every large station for about half an hour, with numerous other halts in between. We did not reach Amiens until 4.30 p.m., just as it was getting dark, where we had another wait of an hour. It was terribly cold ; only by closing every nook and cranny could one keep lukewarm, and then the atmosphere became so bad that we could hardly breathe. I do not know how the officers in the next compartment, which was minus a door, managed to keep alive. I was feeling very feverish with a bad cough, and but for M. of the Norfolks and another officer of the Notts and Derbys, who produced tinned sausage, bread, jam and butter, which they shared with me, I should have fared very badly I felt most the lack of a hot drink, and was most grateful when, at about 9 p.m., some machine-gunners brought us along a dixie of steaming tea. If only some of those nice canteens in England where one sees charming ladies serving superfluous food to soldiers, could be moved to important stations on the lines in France, what good work they would do.

In each box van the soldiers had got hold of petrol cans, punched holes in the sides, and lighted fires therein. When the vans got too smoky or the fires needed kindling, they hung them on the footboards, so that the train looked like a sheet of flame rushing through the night.

23rd November.

We reached St. Quentin at 1 a.m., where we

waited six long hours, and as it was too cold to sleep I walked up and down the platform, or sat on the engine close to the fire.

Dawn revealed the town in ruins, and at 7 a.m. we moved on, but very slowly, and with repeated stops.

We did not reach Vaux until 5 p.m., after a four hours' wait at Busigny within 7 kilometres of our destination, our journey having taken 30 hours.

The R.T.O. directed us to the VIth Division reception camp at Molain, about two kilometres distant. Here, in a small and badly damaged little village, which might accommodate with comfort about 300 men, we found 46 officers and 1,200 men, living in barns, roofless houses and tents—and this, the 23rd of November, and very cold into the bargain. Twelve officers arrived by our train and were allotted a small room which had served as ante-room for the mess. We had to wait a long time for a meal, because only a dozen officers could sit down at a time and there had, therefore, to be four sittings at each meal. The officer in charge of the camp, Captain E., of the Leicesters, an old merchant sailor, very kindly let me spread my valise in his room, where there were only three other officers, one of whom seemed very ill for he lay on his valise groaning, and took no notice of the rum punch with which we warmed ourselves before settling down for the night.

24th November.

Thanks to E., I was able to escape from Molain soon after lunch in a lorry that had been sent down to fetch some men returning off leave. We had a long drive—about 50 miles—and very cold it was on the front seat. For the first 30 miles or so we were passing through country east of the Hindenburg line where the recent fighting had taken place. Rolling downs with no signs of cultivation, numerous shell-holes, and the villages practically ruined, a monotonous, desolate landscape, but of course the devastation is nothing like that where the old stationary battles took place. I am not certain that the vestiges of human habitation do not make the scene sadder than where all is reduced to the same dreary level of utter desolation. A few inhabitants remain in the shattered villages, in a very miserable condition, getting only what food the British Army can spare for them. All along the road we saw families making their way back from Belgium, though what they will do when they get to their homes, and find them in ruins, I cannot imagine. To reach habitable country they will have to trek almost as far as Amiens, with sixty miles of desert to cross before they get there.

After a while we came out of the battle zone into country which showed none of the scars of war, and at dusk we passed through the picturesque old town of Avesnes, full of

inhabitants and troops. Not much further on, across the Belgian frontier, was Beaumont with the shop windows lighted by electricity; not that there was much offered for sale, but just to see the lights was sufficiently extraordinary. Belgium is a progressive country, and even quite small villages have electric light, and since the Armistice the Boche seems to have stopped looting and destroying.

We had men of the 9th Battalion, Norfolk Regiment, 1st Leicestershire Regiment, and 2nd Battalion Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derbys), the three Battalions of the 71st Infantry Brigade, 6th Division, in our lorry, and neither the officer in charge of the Reception Camp nor the men, had been given any idea where their units were. All that the driver knew was that his destination was Barbençon, a few kilometres further on. At Beaumont a military policeman told me that the Norfolks were billeted at Barbençon, which news cheered me up immensely, as I was cold to the marrow and the prospect of a good dinner and a bed after six days of travelling was most inviting. We had to drop the men of the Leicester and Sherwood Foresters at Beaumont, and I expect the poor fellows spent most of the night wandering about the countryside in search of their units.

I found the Headquarters of the 9th Battalion, Norfolk Regiment, in a little château on the top of a hill among sweet smelling pine-trees. The Colonel, D., received me in a most friendly

manner, and I found that I was just in time to sit down to a most excellent meal, to which the owner of the château and his wife had been invited. They were simple, homely people, large farmers I should say, kind at heart but awkward from embarrassment. I have not had such a dinner for a long, long time. Soup, fish, chicken, sweet, savoury and a delicious cake which Madame had made. Our host also produced some sweet champagne and cream for our coffee. My French, and my little girl's photos which I showed to Madame, won her heart, and she insisted on abandoning her bed to me, she and her husband doubling up in some remote corner of the house. As I was dead-beat I was indeed grateful to them for their kindness.

25th November.

This morning at 10 a.m., we left Barbençon and marched about 20 kilometres to Yves Gomezee in wonderful weather—sunshine and frost—along the western edge of the Ardennes, through hilly, well wooded country. This was my first march in the ranks of an infantry battalion, and very pleasant I found it; the way was not too long, and our fatigue was relieved by the band and the ten minutes' halt at the end of each hour. I had to modify considerably my normal pace, which is an abnormal stride, in order to keep time with the short, quick step of the infantry. About 3 p.m. we wound down a steep valley, across a

foaming torrent into Yves Gomezee, with the band playing "Rule, Britannia," the regimental march of the Norfolks. Here we found comfortable quarters awaiting us and a good lunch, for Battalion Headquarters cooks and mess box go on ahead in a motor-lorry. Among other luxuries, we had fresh eggs and butter.

Rumour has it that we are to stay two days at Yves Gomezee and that we are making for Dinant en route for Cologne. I have no duties to perform, but this life promises at least to be interesting and healthy.

26th November.

At Yves Gomezee.

To-day I borrowed three curious old guns which the Germans had left behind, probably because they did not think them worth taking, bought some cartridges from an innkeeper and, at 10 a.m., the Colonel, another officer and myself, accompanied by two *gardes forestiers* in green hats, and about half a dozen soldiers to act as beaters, set off for the woods on the hills south of the village. There were plenty of birds, but the shooting was bad, and I got so ashamed after having missed two easy shots at cock pheasants, that I invited the chief of the *gardes forestiers* to take my gun for a time. I need have felt no shame, for his shooting was even worse than mine. Either he had lost the art during the war or the green hat was only worn for the occasion: I rather incline to the latter view.

We returned at tea-time with three pheasants, a hare and a partridge ; about an equal number could not be picked up owing to the lack of a dog. We came upon the traces of several wild boars, but were not fortunate enough to meet one of these animals. I believe they are very numerous higher up in the Ardennes, and the inhabitants say they do a lot of damage by coming down into the valleys and rooting up the potatoes.

After tea I settled down for a quiet read in the kitchen of my billet ; a clean, warm, comfortable, stone-floored room, with a well-scrubbed table and nicely polished dressers and cupboards. My hostesses, the Demoiselles Le Roi, are two elderly maiden ladies in comfortable circumstances, daughters of a well-to-do, but now defunct farmer. A little girl, who looks like a ghost, sits all day in a chair by the fire. Her name is Joséphine, and she is slowly recovering from influenza and pneumonia. She comes of a very poor family and when mother, father, Joséphine and her little brother all fell ill at the same time the Demoiselles Le Roi, who are charitable and fear God, brought Joséphine to their house and have cared for her ever since. The mother has since died, but this they are keeping from the poor child until she is stronger.

My old ladies, who have two cows, insist on bringing me a cup of hot milk with sugar each morning and night. They often offer me coffee or cocoa, but these I refuse, because all

that they have is what the American Relief Committee gives to them, and they can ill afford to spare any of it.

27th November.

This morning one of my kind hostesses knocked at my bedroom door just as I had finished dressing to ask if I would like to receive "Le Bon Dieu," as the priest was coming to administer the sacrament to little Joséphine at 8. They had forgotten that I was not a Roman Catholic; perhaps in their secluded valley they had found it hard to realise that heretics really exist, for poor old Mdlle. Le Roi looked quite frightened when I told her that I was a Protestant. I added that though there were many different forms of religion, there was after all only one God, which cheered the dear old lady up for a moment or two.

Our departure from Yves Gomezee has been postponed; I believe owing to difficulties of transport, several delay action mines which the Germans left behind under the railway line having exploded. This afternoon I went for a walk in search of fresh butter for our mess, and about two miles from Yves Gomezee, on the south side of the valley which leads to Florennes, I came across a very large and fine old stone farm-house. The farms hereabouts are remarkably well and substantially built of hard greystone; most of them are old, and little turreted chapels shows that they were once cultivated by the monks of some rich abbey.

I went in and asked the good lady if she could supply me with some butter; she received me with the greatest kindness, said that I could have a pound for 5 francs, and invited me to stop for tea. I learned that she was a cousin of the farmer who, with his wife, was away on a visit. She is a widow and lived at Namur when the war started. Her house was destroyed during the bombardment in August, 1914, and after hiding in the cellar for two days she escaped with her two little girls to her cousins at Froidmond—for that is the name of the farm. She gave me some delicious coffee, bread, butter and red currant jelly served on the bare kitchen table without plates. There is plenty of food in the farms, but in the towns the poorer classes are very short of food. We had a very pleasant talk about the war, and I was able to tell them many things which they had not heard before. Before leaving I showed my hostess my little girl's photographs which I carry in my pocket-book, and she begged me to give her one, which I did. On my way home I met a Flemish woman who lives in a tiny cottage on the Florennes Walcourt railway—or rather what was the railway—because in 1915 the Boche removed rails, sleepers, signals, iron bridges and station fittings, to use somewhere on his lines of communications. She told me that her husband is a prisoner in Germany and wanted to know if I thought he would soon be coming home again. Five weeks ago an American soldier

who had escaped from the Germans knocked at her door and asked if she would give him some food. She took him in, hid him in her tiny cottage and kept him supplied with food until the British troops arrived a month or so later; a most generous deed, for she is evidently very poor and has two little children to provide for.

I found a nice parcel of books awaiting me, so I spent a quiet evening in the kitchen reading with the two old ladies, little Joséphine and the cat.

28th November.

The divisional commander decided that each brigade was to hold a cross-country race to-day. So our men were marched two or three miles in heavy rain to near the village of Daussois, where some 2,000 were formed up in a field in a solid phalanx. When the flag fell, the 2,000 men charged down the hill, carrying fences and hedges before them and obliterating whole fields of winter wheat. The course was five kilometres round, ending up close to the starting point, but only the first 50 or so stuck to the course. The remaining 1950, after running a kilometre or so, realized the possibilities of the situation, and doubling back struck the course a few hundred yards from the finishing tape, upon which they bore down in a confused mob, long before the conscientious few were half-way round. The whole thing was a farce; or rather, would have been, were it not for the

damage done to the Belgian crops. The idea was to make the men fit by giving them healthy exercise, but I have yet to learn that to run five kilometres across ploughed fields in the pouring rain when they are not in training, is likely to make any men fit. What is more, they got very hot and wet through at the same time, and had then to put on their tunics over their wet shirts and march two or three miles home. When they arrived they had nowhere to dry their clothes and nothing to change into, so they were far more likely to get influenza than to get fit.

29th November.

A very pleasant walk with the padre this afternoon along the railway to Walcourt, a little town of some 2,000 souls three miles distant. As all the rails and sleepers were removed by the Germans in 1915, the track is pleasant to walk on and one has the advantage of going on the level through the midst of hills. The scenery is pleasing. Little well-rounded hills tumbled together anyhow, not unlike those parts of South Devon which lie on the outskirts of Dartmoor; only the valleys are flatter and the hills bleaker, being covered for the most part with brushwood and stubby trees like bristles. Walcourt, which clings precariously to the side of a steep hill, is a pleasant little town in which white is the dominant colour, its gables making an irregular outline against the sky. It possesses an

exceptionally fine Gothic church—cruciform in shape, with two aisles on each side of the nave, ambulatory and apse. At the western end is a splendid old Romanesque tower. The choir is early Gothic—the age of its greatest purity—with tall lancet arches opening into the ambulatory, which seems to have been built slightly later, for there is trefoil and cinquefoil tracery above the windows; in the aisle windows one sees the commencement of more elaborate tracery. The interior of the church is sober and pleasing of aspect, there being few of those tawdry pictures and statues of saints with which Roman Catholics delight to disfigure their places of worship. A magnificent, carved oak screen—I should say of the fifteenth century—separates choir and nave. In the shrine of Nôtre-Dame de Walcourt, is a cheap plaster figure of the Virgin Mary, which is, apparently, endowed with miraculous qualities, for hanging on the walls are many crutches and written testimonies to the cures effected by it.

After tea Joséphine's father and little brother came in to pay a visit. He is a very dark, pale-faced man, with a wild eye, receding forehead and masses of black, untidy hair, very poor and ignorant, I should say, but intelligent and enthusiastic; the sort of stuff that drunkards or saints are made of according to the influence they come under. He asked me many questions about England, "Are there many mines?" "Lots of coal and iron mines," I told him.

"And gold and silver?" he went on. I explained to him that England was not cold because of the Gulf Stream, which filled him with wonder, and I think he was disinclined to believe me, until his little boy—an abnormally intelligent lad—told him he had learned all about that at school a long time ago. Then I talked to him about our colonies. He could not understand how Canada could be bigger than the whole of Europe, which he had considered hitherto to contain the major portion of the earth's habitable land. When I told him of the 300,000,000 people of India, of its gold, silver and precious stones, his eyes bulged with excitement. After that we talked about the sea and its mysteries. The adventure of his life was a voyage which he had once made in a pleasure steamer from Blankenberghe to Ostend. What impressed him most was the rise and fall of the tide, which was, and is to him an inexplicable mystery. "Just imagine, Monsieur, when we left the pier at Blankenberghe the water was within a few feet off the tops of the piles, and when we came back we had to climb up a steep ladder to get ashore." When I told him that I had been four years at sea in the navy, and that in the Atlantic were waves as high as the church steeple at Gomezee, he looked at me with awe, as if only something supernatural could have brought me through such incredible perils.

Joséphine has become quite a little lady while she has been living in the refined atmos-

phere of this house, and I could see that she was rather ashamed of her father's ignorance and rough appearance. He, poor man, regards her with the most intense affection, but when he tried to kiss her before leaving she drew away from him.

I am afraid that she will be very unhappy when she goes home to keep house for him in their little hovel, for, although so undersized that she looks no more than 9, she is 13, and will have to take the place of her mother at the head of the household. Unhappy little Joséphine, it may well be that the few weeks of luxury—for the homely comfort of the Demoiselles Le Roi's home is luxury to such as you—will have planted in your child's heart a love of comfort which will prove your undoing when you grow to be a woman. Joséphine's father told us that his wife had saved no less than 1000 francs during the war out of his scant earnings as a cabinet maker. This she had only been able to do by depriving herself and her family of the necessities of existence. Poor soul, she has paid for her thrift with her life, and brought her family very near the grave also.

30th November.

To-day I joined " B " Company mess, as the Brigadier has ordered that I am to be attached to a company instead of remaining with Battalion Headquarters. A company mess is a very primitive affair compared to Battalion Head-

quarters, and owing to another mine having gone up somewhere in the line we were without fresh meat and bread to-day. Ration biscuits being poor food for tea, I decided to go over to Froidmond to see if my kind friends would sell me a loaf of bread. I was received just as hospitably as before by the farmer's cousin, and while enjoying my bread, butter and jam, the farmer and his wife returned from their journey. They were surprised to find me installed in their kitchen and were a trifle standoffish until they found that I could talk French and was a captain, when they became affability itself.

They appear most worthy people; short, squat, ugly, hard-headed, suspicious, until their confidence was won, after which they showed that their hearts were made of gold.

They sold me a large loaf of bread weighing at least 10 lbs. for 2 fcs. 50, and pressed me to visit them again on the morrow. I set off home about 5 o'clock with a light heart, my huge circle of bread under my arm, but in climbing down the hill in the dark slipped, and nearly lost it in the river.

My companions in " B " Company seem good fellows. H., the company commander, was an officer in the South African war, after which he became a clergyman, and is now back in the army again. Then there is Captain S., the quartermaster, a fine old soldier with 30 years' service. T., the transport officer, an ex-trooper in a cavalry regiment, a cheery soul

if a trifle licentious. B., son of a canon of Norwich and a housemaster at Giggleswick, who, with his glasses, benign smile, and slow movements, has an academic appearance wholly foreign to the military profession.

1st December.

I took T. over with me to Froidmond this afternoon, where Monsieur Bertrand and his wife entertained us right royally. While we were waiting for tea monsieur showed us round his farm, which is really a model of all that a farm should be, and could not be better kept were it a military establishment with unlimited labour for its upkeep. Well stocked granaries, clean and sweet smelling stables and cow-houses, fine pig-styes, which, unlike most pig-sties, were spotlessly clean, a large chicken house equally so, and the rest. Water is turned on everywhere, so the labourers have no excuse for not keeping both themselves and the building clean, and electric light is supplied from a dynamo driven by the stream which runs down the valley a few hundred yards away. I expect there was a telephone, but I forgot to ask about this.

We had a most pleasant afternoon. Several neighbours had been invited in, and a spotless cloth had been spread in our honour. Farm servants gathered at the door to hear the tales of the war which I had to tell, for these good people have heard little news from the outside world for four years past. When I told the story of

Robert Digby's death and read a translation of his last letter to his mother, the good people all took out their handkerchiefs and shed a few silent tears, to the astonishment of T., who, understanding not a word of French, was smiling inanely at the farmer's pretty niece, who sat opposite him.

We rode home about six o'clock in the dark, T's. mare giving so much trouble that he had to get off and lead her.

2nd December.

To-day the battalion marched to the village of Flavion, about 18 kilometres distant, starting at 10 a.m. I walked on ahead along the railway as far as the little town of Florennes, where I found a splendid old Romanesque church. I entered through a dark, rounded arch beneath a massive square tower, and found myself in a church of simple plan—nave, aisles, and apse. Unfortunately the interior was decorated with cheap and gaudy pictures and statues, which detracted a good deal from the peculiar solemnity of a dimly lighted Romanesque church. I rested here a while, listening to the music of the organ, which was very grand.

On my way through the town I was overtaken by S., the quartermaster, who gave me a lift to Flavion in the battalion lorry. There we found D. . . . and the company quartermaster-sergeants, engaged in the difficult and tiring process of billeting the battalion,

in which I was able to give them some assistance, as their collective knowledge of French did not amount to more than the single sentence: "Avez-vous place pour soldats, madame ?" This was my first experience of billeting. One has to look at every house, barn and stable in the village, size up the accommodation and allot it in about three hours, for the burgomasters have no proper billeting lists. The most difficult part is to find accommodation for 36 officers and their six different messes and, try as one will, one company is sure to have a grievance because its billets are not as good as another's.

I was lodged in a tiny cottage where live a widow and her two grown-up daughters. They proved most friendly and hospitable; gave me a cup of barley coffee when I arrived and presented me with a large hot pastry for tea, which was most welcome, as for two days we have been without bread. Our mess was in another tiny cottage, the owners of which, a working man and his family, were equally hospitable and friendly.

3rd December.

Twelve kilometres to-day to Sommières. Soon after leaving Flavion the road passed into hilly country thickly wooded with pines and spruce fires, and beyond Ostemerée there was a long, long hill to climb, the view from the top of which more than rewarded my labours. A deep valley in the foreground and then hill beyond hill fading into a purple mist on the

far horizon; grey rain clouds passing in monotonous succession overhead, but a wealth of solemn colour on the hills, the deep green of the firs, the lighter green of the fields, the rich red ploughland and the mysterious russet of the leafless trees and brushwood. On my right a noisy stream went tumbling down the Trou de Corenne.

Billeting was difficult, as these mountain villages are poorer than those we stayed in on the rich foothills, and there are no large buildings in Sommières.

I lodged myself with the *curé*, who was less interested in my arrival than in that of two heavy draught horses, which I promised to have put in his stable so that he could have the manure for his garden. He never left his doorstep until those horses arrived, and kept asking me whether I did not think more than two could be got into his little stable. After they had arrived, he repeatedly looked into the stable to see to what extent they were likely to enrich the soil of his garden.

Our mess is in a rich farmhouse close by. Madame Bouchat, the farmer's wife, invited me to share their midday meal, and a very excellent repast it was. One of her daughters, a charming, well-educated, clean and pretty girl of 18 waited on us, and the old grandfather acted host with the most distinguished courtesy. When the other officers arrived about one o'clock, Madame Bouchat insisted on preparing another meal for them.

The *curé* is a dear old man, with a mind as simple as a child's. He has a comfortable old house beside the church, with a nice oak staircase; the mural decorations consist entirely of pictures, or paper effigies of Christ and the Virgin Mary. The favourite form of picture in this part of the world represents the Virgin exposing her naked heart, which is transfixed with a sword and surrounded with a wreath of roses; underneath is written "*Cor Mariae Immaculatum—Ora Pro Nobis.*" I asked the *curé* whether, after tea, I might come into his kitchen to read, to which he replied that he would be only too pleased, as he himself generally devoted that hour to saying his breviary. As a matter of fact, I found both him and his old *bonne* sitting beside the fire, each with a basin on their knees, cutting up endive. Nor did I get any opportunity to read, for his childlike curiosity was such that he kept plying me with questions about the war, of which he knew little, and the great world of which he knew less.

He was particularly interested to hear of the capture by the British of Jerusalem, and was both pleased and surprised when I assured him that the Roman Catholics would be at liberty to worship God in their own way at the Holy Shrine and in the temple. The dear old man, I think, has always regarded us Protestants as wild heretics, only one degree preferable to Turks and other infidels. I assured him that there was very little difference between us

and Roman Catholics, as we both worshipped God only in a slightly different manner. "After all, monsieur le curé," I added, "the God which you and I believe in is the same." He readily assented, but remembering that his old *bonne* was present, and would probably repeat this dangerous heresy in the village, quickly changed the subject. We then talked of Constantinople, and when I told him of St. Sophia, the size of its dome, of its porphyry pillars and marble floors, his wonder knew no bounds. When we were talking of the effect of Britain's sea power on the war, he naïvely confided to me that some years ago he was invited to attend a Roman Catholic Congress in London, but had not gone because of his fear of crossing the water.

Poor old fellow, he, too, has had his troubles during the war. In August, 1914, when, after several days of distant gunfire, the French cavalry went streaming back through the village and fugitives from Dinant came in with tales of German atrocities, the inhabitants of Sommières, including the *curé*, took to the fields and woods. For three weeks the old man lived in a remote upland farm disguised as a labourer. "Had they found me, monsieur," he said, "I should have been shot. They killed 28 priests in the diocese of Namur, because they said the clergy were inciting the people to resist."

After dinner old Monsieur Bouchat, who is 84 years old, came into our mess to smoke his

long Dutch pipe in the chimney corner. He is a charming old man ; talks such pure French and is so full of natural courtesy and simple wisdom. He also took flight when the Germans approached, and was much aggrieved because they took 15 shirts which he had left behind. When I expressed surprise at his having so many, he told me that he had taken ten away with him.

4th December.

This morning I walked to Dinant, 6 kilometres distant. About 2 kilometres from Sommières, in a large field to the left of the road, are 23 *Fokker* (DVII) scouts and a double engined "*Friedrichshafen*" bombing machine, left behind by the Germans in good condition, as part of the war material they have to surrender in accordance with the terms of the Armistice. Beyond this the road winds down a narrow gorge between scraggy hills, which a little farther on become rugged, their almost vertical sides clothed with firs, and their summits crowned with pinnacles of grey rock. At the end of the gorge was a troubled cauldron of smoke and mist, through which the buildings of Bouvignes loomed large and indistinct, so that I felt like some knight of old wending my way to the haunts of dragons and other monstrous powers of evil. Bouvignes is a most picturesque old village. The church, a beautiful and ancient Romanesque building, stands on a foundation of rock and masonry about 20 feet high, where the valley is at its

narrowest, before broadening out into the funnel where lies the village. Opposite is a tall rock crowned by the remains of the Château de Crèvecœur.

The road formerly ran through a narrow gateway in the masonry beneath the church, but has now been carried a little further to the left, where the old wall has been knocked down to afford a passage. The Germans caused much damage to the church when they wantonly bombarded Bouvignes in August, 1914, the southern transept being completely demolished. In the square in front are some old houses with very high pitched green slate roofs, known for some reason or other as the Spanish houses, and the village, with its quays giving upon the Meuse, its irregular gables and grotesque chimneys outlined against the cliffs, is most picturesque.

The wife of the *garde champêtre* who fetched the key of the church from the *curé's* house, told me that 14 of her family, including two sons, a daughter, and a son-in-law, were killed by the Germans when they massacred the inhabitants of Dinant in August, 1914. The surviving daughter, whose husband had been shot, was with her and confirmed all that the woman said. "Monsieur, they were such good children to me," she cried. "One of them had just been made an inspector of posts and the other had just finished his studies at college. *Mon Dieu*, *mon Dieu*, the Germans shot them, and what is there left for me now?"

Dinant lies a kilometre or so farther on, along both banks of the Meuse, at the foot of the hills, or rather rocks, which wall the narrow valley in. It is a most picturesquely situated little town and was, before the war, a favourite haunt of tourists. A gay little spot it must have been, with crowds of happy holiday makers frequenting its hotels, pastry-cooks, cafés and shops; setting out in diligences to visit the surrounding country, or in river steamers to see the beauty of the Meuse. The holiday season was in full swing when the German hordes burst upon Dinant in that fatal August, and now, in the grey mist drifting up the Meuse, Dinant seemed like a woman who would hide her face of sorrow in a veil. Many of the finest buildings have been destroyed, either by shells or wantonly by fire when the terror was raging. The hotels—such of them as remain—are empty and most of the shops are closed, those which are open containing little but postcards, or worthless trifles such as soldiers buy to send home to their families as souvenirs.

Only too great cause for sorrow has Dinant, for the Germans passed through the streets, howling like wild beasts, massacring without regard for age or sex. Little children they impaled upon their bayonets before their mothers' eyes, and women forced to stand by while their husbands were shot. They excuse their actions, which they do not deny, on the ground that *francs-tireurs* and the *garde civique*

fired upon them as they were entering the town. But the municipal council, at a public meeting held a week or two ago, has protested in the most solemn manner that no *francs-tireurs* fired upon the German troops, that all arms had been handed in to the Town Hall by the 6th of August, and that the *garde civique* was disarmed after the battle between the French and Germans on the 15th of August, in which they took no part. The Germans were driven back in this fight, and it was not until the 23rd of August that they entered Dinant. According to figures just published by the municipal council, on that and the following day they butchered 650 civilians, of whom 30 were women, 18 children under 14, and 8 children under 2½ years of age. The bodies of several priests were afterwards taken naked from the Meuse, and I am told—on less reliable authority—that the nuns in a neighbouring convent were outraged. There is no doubt that this massacre, like that at Louvain, was deliberately planned and ordered by the German General Staff, in order to terrorize the civilian population of Belgium. A rapid advance was essential to success. If the civil population should assist in destroying railways, digging up roads, hiding food, and generally placing every obstacle in the invaders' way short of taking up arms, the advance would be delayed; so the General Staff decided to terrorize the inhabitants into submission.

Dinant contains a very fine Gothic church,

which stands on the right bank of the river at the foot of a wall of rock some two or three hundred feet high. It belongs to the early days of Gothic art, and is cruciform in plan, with naive, aisles, transepts, choir and ambulatory. At the western end are two square towers which had formerly pyramidical wooden tops with a curious cupola-shaped spire in between them. Fortunately these extraneous additions were destroyed during the German bombardment. The outside of the church is not very imposing, probably because it is dominated by the mass of grey rock beneath which it stands; but the interior is of great beauty, singular grace of form being enhanced by the peculiar grey tint of the stone of which it is constructed. The pointed arches of the nave are supported on lofty pillars, which tower away into the shadowy vault like an avenue of beech trees in the twilight; above, an arcade of small pillars supporting interlaced arches runs round the church; higher still is the clerestory. The vaulting of the nave, which is of great beauty, springs from pillars on a level with the clerestory. The choir and northern transept have simple lancet windows; the southern transept a superb window with a trefoil and cinquefoil tracery above tall lancets. It contains very beautiful stained glass which fortunately escaped destruction in 1914. The design of the church is simple, symmetrical, and obviously the work of a single artist.

5th December.

This morning we said good-bye to our kind friends the Bouchats and marched to Braibant, about 25 kilometres distant. We started at 8 a.m., which meant turning out at 6 and breakfasting at 6.30, because the valises and mess boxes had to be packed. We left in a thick grey mist, but soon the sun drank up the vapours and shone out in a clear blue sky. We had an easy swing down to the Meuse through Bouvignes, but as the bridge at this place has been destroyed, had to march on to Dinant and then back a kilometre or so on the right bank of the river, to where our road turned off to the hills. For seven long kilometres it wound up a narrow valley enclosed between almost perpendicular walls of rock, with here and there a gentler slope decked with trees and undergrowth—spruce firs, pines and silver beeches, those white robed ladies of the hills. It was very warm in the valley and the march was a hard one for the men, who have to carry the preposterous weight of 85 lbs. on their backs and wear leather jerkins which admit no air, and allow no outlet for perspiration. Fortunately the engineering of the road was so skilful that the gradient was everywhere comparatively slight.

A little stream went tearing down the valley within a few yards of our road, and we longed for a good draught of its cool

water, but, alas, there is a G.R.O. forbidding troops to drink out of any stream and, although this mountain torrent was obviously pure, the Colonel has no power to override G.R.O's., so we had to sit during the ten minutes' halt and pant in vain. Once, owing to the sinuosity of the road, I was able to see the whole column, two miles long and more, led by the Sherwood Foresters, with ourselves in rear, winding up the valley in faultless step and order, with bands playing and colours unfurled. After the best part of two hours' climb, we came to the well-built grey stone village of Thynes, which we entered to the tune of that most excellent of marches, "The old grey mare she ain't what she used to be." The band is a great help on the march, for when one feels at the end of one's powers of endurance, a good swinging tune produces an electrical effect.

The people had decorated the streets with young spruce firs, between which were spread banners bearing legends such as "Honneur aux alliés," "Greetings to the brave English," and so forth.

From Thynes we emerged into a broad plateau stretching away to the horizon, and bounded on the north by a range of hills, on the gentle and distant slopes of which were spread fair woods and villages. The soil seemed fertile, the country rich, and the air of the uplands was wonderfully fresh and invigorating. I do not know whether it was because we had just

emerged from the rugged, restricted valley that the view seemed so spacious, but I could not recall having ever seen a landscape at once so grand, so vast, and yet so full of delicate beauty. The weather continued fine throughout the day, and as the sun neared the horizon the rich tints of nature became softer and infused with a mysterious spirit, until the distant woods and villages seemed to float in the mist. Then came night and the stars.

The men stood the march well and were unfailingly cheerful and good-natured. They are full of quaint remarks, one man calling out to another, " Jerry didn't succeed in killing us in 4½ years, but I reckon they won't take so long doing it at this game."

As usual, we passed, by the side of the road, a considerable number of burnt-out German lorries and motor-cars, which had broken down, or could not be driven farther for lack of petrol. In the ditches are hundreds of German steel helmets and gas masks where they have been chucked by the tired soldiers.

We are billeted in a farm-house and our men are sleeping in the barns. The people of these uplands are very different in appearance from those in the villages on the other side of the Meuse—large, spare, square-headed, with hard, rather Teutonic, faces. After an hour or so's conversation with our hosts I broke through their reserve and suspicion of all strangers, and found them to be kind-hearted, though hard-headed folk.

The son of the house, a sergeant-major in the Belgian artillery, is home on leave for the first time in 4½ years ; for when war broke out he was at Liége and has fought ever since. His old grandmother is filled with rejoicing at seeing him once more. Hers is one of the most beautiful faces I have ever seen, partly because of its fine features, but principally because of the look of quiet serenity which they wear. Few have been her wants and long have been her days, and now, in the autumn of her life, she is like some splendid oak, which age has rendered but more stately. Hers is such a face as one sees in those pictures of homely comfort, which the Dutch and Flemish artists loved to paint. Old Monsieur Bouchat, of Sommières, sitting by the fireside in his black smock with his long pipe, was another living picture. Happening to pass through the kitchen about 10 o'clock, I found the farmer and his wife kneeling together by the fire saying their prayers before going to bed.

7th December.

Yesterday the battalion marched about 15 kilometres to the village of Emptinne, where we are resting to-day. As all the other officers were out during the afternoon, B., M. and I had a very pleasant time to ourselves, which we spent in reading and talking. At first Q. was also in the mess, and a pleasant afternoon with him is impossible, because he whistles ragtimes, sniffs and swears continually,

but I got rid of him by telling him that I had heard there was some whisky on sale at the Corps Canteen in Ciney. As he cares for little but drink he borrowed one of the battalion bicycles and rode over there. He did not find any whisky, but spent what was, for him, a very pleasant afternoon and evening in a wine-shop. B. and I had some interesting discussions about Plato's *Phaedo*, which he carries in his pocket. He is a nice fellow, and his smile is a benediction, but one of the least military looking persons I have ever seen.

8th December.

At 8.30 a.m. we left Emptinne and marched to the little town of Havelange, 12 kilometres distant. Beyond Hamois we came into well-wooded country, and for the last 3 kilometres or so our road ran between an avenue of spruce firs. Havelange is a bourgeois little town with nothing to distinguish it but a certain dull prosperity. Some of the younger members of the Battalion Headquarters mess organized a dance, to which all the best looking young ladies were invited through the agency of the Major. The dance was kept going until 2 a.m.

9th December.

A long trail to-day. We left at 7.30 a.m., which meant turning out at 5.15 a.m. Our destination was to have been Ellemelle, a tiny hamlet of 290 inhabitants, but as the billeting party found there was not room for the batta-

lion—how could there be in so small a village ? —we had to march two or three kilometres out of our way in a N.W. direction to Fraiture, a rather larger village.

The day was grey and the country through which we passed at first scraggy, featureless and untidy. About half way to Ellemelle it began to rain hard, and the additional burden of a raincoat as well as the muddy condition of the roads made the march arduous. The men were very tired, but bore their fatigue with their usual cheerfulness. Their remarks are very quaint.

"I reckon the soup will all be boiled away before we get in to-night," says one. "It's been (bean) soup to-day," says another. "'As been soup, you mean," from a third. "What about that £50 bounty and three months' leave if yer signs on again, Alf ?" "Gawd, I wouldn't sign on again for £1000 and a year's leave."

I find that after about three hours' marching one's movements become more or less mechanical, and one drags along in the mud and rain, possessed by a sort of aching tiredness, until temporarily recalled to life by a good march tune. When on the point of exhaustion fresh and unsuspected stores of energy are discovered—the so-called second wind. Presently the tired feeling comes on again, until just as one is on the point of giving in, by some mysterious process which is probably more mental than

physical, fresh sources of energy are plumbed ; and so on until with the end of the stock of courage comes the collapse.

Fraiture, as I have said, is a small village, and as it contains 400 French refugees there is not much spare room ; fortunately we have been able to get most of the men into a large empty and very beautiful château.

Our mess is in a farm-house, the owners of which are not very obliging. B., whose French is not strong, went into the kitchen to ask if they could supply us with another bed. The young lady, not understanding a word of what he said, and thinking, no doubt, to poke a little fun at him, for in his spectacles he has a most old and fatherly appearance, said with a wink at me : " Il-y-a des beaux jeunes gens en Angleterre, n'est-ce pas, monsieur ? " To which B., who had not understood what she said, replied : " Oui, mais ou est le lit ? " The girl burst into laughter, and covering her face with her apron, ran out of the kitchen. She proved to be a disobliging wench, for though we worked her churn for her she would not let us have more than half a pound of butter, and charged six francs for that.

This village is pleasantly situated on high ground amid fine woods. The Belgian Government runs the woods and forests on scientific lines, but, as the timber is cut as soon as it has commercial value, one sees none but comparatively young trees, which detracts in

a measure from the dignity of the woods. I miss our ancient British oaks and elms, our stately beeches and chestnuts.

The château in which the men are billeted is a very fine building of the early eighteenth century, decorated in the style of Louis XIV. Inside it is in a state of great dilapidation and dirt; but the walls and ceilings are covered with half effaced, but still beautiful, frescoes. It is curious to see the men living among these faded remains of luxury and pleasure.

I don't think that the Belgians, on the whole, are very kind to the French people who have sought a refuge in their country. The 400 French in Fraiture were evacuated by the Germans from the Vosges shortly before the end of the war, and sent here via the Rhineland. The Germans must have anticipated an attack by the American forces which would have compelled them to retreat, for these people all came from villages well clear of the battle zone. Now their lot is very miserable. A number of them are living in one wing of the château; 80 women and children are herded like cattle in the village schoolroom, and the remainder are scattered throughout the village. As far as I can make out, the Belgians only give them a thin soup twice a day and a very inadequate ration of bread. They are, of course, without beds or mattresses—this is inevitable—and have no fuel save what they ca gather in the woods. They look ill, starved and crushed by misery. The *curé* tells me that

he has buried many during the few short weeks they have been in Fraiture.

In all the villages through which we have passed in Belgium I have come across some French refugees, who appeared half starved and had many complaints to make of their treatment. Of course the Belgians themselves are short of food ; but, in view of all that has been done for them by the American Commission, I think they might have done more for their guests, uninvited though they are.

The sufferings of Belgium cannot be compared with those of Northern France, which the Germans have reduced to a wilderness. The Belgians still have a fair proportion of their horses and cattle left, their fields are well cultivated, and most of their mines and factories are either working or in a position to resume work. The French have nothing left to them : not even a roof.

10th December.

Resting at Fraiture. B. and I spent the afternoon with the *curé* in his sitting-room. He is a dear old man and, like the *curé* of Sommières, has a character as simple as a child's. When we arrived he exhibited to us, with unrestrained glee, various articles of copper and brass which he had secreted from the Germans in the church organ and recounted how, at Huy, on Armistice Day, the inhabitants placed in their windows, for the benefit of the retreating Germans, all the copper articles which

they had successfully hidden. He is a keen student of modern literature and has read translations of Scott and Dickens, the works of the latter making a great impression upon him. I have always found Dickens popular in France, and still more so in Germany. He asked me if I could recommend a good work in French on English literature, and I told him he that could not do better than read Taine's *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*. He then went on to talk with bated breath of the iniquities of Monsieur Anatole France and other modern French writers. He is also somewhat of a musician, and when I first met him was playing Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius" on his piano, a work which he described as quite new to him. He wanted to know all about our lives before the war, and when I told him that B. was a schoolmaster he said, to the latter's annoyance: "Ah oui. Il a l'air d'un bon bourgeois qui s'est engraissé dans un fauteuil."

11th December.

At 8.40 a.m. we left Fraiture to march to Awyaille on the Ambleuve, 24 kilometres distant. We went by by-roads as far as Hody, and the going was very hard, for the way was hilly and the mud six inches deep in the lanes. At Hody, we reached the "summit of our trajectory"—as the gunners would say—and commanded a very fine view over hills and valleys. Thence our road ran through

Anthisnes, a hill-side townlet with several quaint turreted buildings of great antiquity, and a few kilometres farther on began to wind in steep spirals, down a rocky valley to the river Ourthe at Comblain-au-Pont. The scenery was very picturesque, for the Ourthe, a rapi ly running river, is narrowly enclosed between rocky heights. Comblain-au-Pont, a town of 4,900 inhabitants, has nothing to distinguish it save the beauty of its situation. Here we crossed the Ourthe and branched off down the valley of its tributary, the Ambleuve, which is also rapid, unnavigable, and enclosed by rugged hills of grey stone sparsely clad with pine and firs. The last half dozen kilometres were very trying, for it was raining and the road had been so cut about by motor traffic that one was often up to the ankles in mud and water. About ten men in the company in front of us collapsed ; but we had no casualties. A kilometre or so before Aywaille, the valley broadened out and the scenery became gentler.

In Aywaille, a pleasant little town of about 3,000 inhabitants, the shop windows are gaily lighted, but contain few marketable goods. I managed to buy a cabbage, some highly-scented cheeses, and some very good sweets at 10 centimes each. The men stood the march well, especially the draft of 150 who arrived by train yesterday and had to start off with a 25 kilometre march to-day. Some of the poor fellows' feet were in a very bad state

when we arrived and I don't know how they stuck it out.

Rations have been bad on the march. The full quantity seldom arrives and we are often reduced to bully beef and biscuits. We have had little jam and practically no margarine since we started on our march.

12th December.

To-day we had the longest and most trying march that we have done up to the present. We left Aywaille at 9 a.m. for Francorchamps, 32 kilometres distant, and did not reach our destination until 4.45 p.m., after $7\frac{3}{4}$ hours' continuous marching in heavy rain across mountainous country. Our road ran along the valley of the Ambleuve as far as Remouchamps, a pretty little holiday resort famous for its grottos, where we crossed to the right bank of the river and made our way north into the hills; and a very stiff climb it was. After we had reached a certain height, the view down the valley of the Ambleuve behind us was magnificent, the silver thread of the river winding between massive purple hills crowned with pinnacles of rock, and a fair green valley opening up in the distance.

The country into which we were climbing was equally impressive; the brushwood and leafless forests most beautiful in their colouring —like heather in the autumn, only softer and more velvety. We reached the top of the hill

at an altitude of 1,500 feet, just in time for the hourly halt. On both sides of the road was a thick wood of young fir trees and, as I lay on a bed of pine needles beneath the shelter of the trees for the short ten minutes, the dark forest seemed to invite me to creep deep into its heart, where there would penetrate no sound of marching armies.

It now began to rain heavily. Over the crest, an equally steep hill carried us down through La Reid into the valley of Spa. It was past noon, and the men who had done a long march yesterday were beginning to get tired.

"Well," said one, hitching up his pack, "I shall keep a brave heart until 3 o'clock, but I shall have a damned bad one after that." "Oh, Gawd, they'll kill us if they ain't careful!" and another. "Well, I looks at it like this, if they ain't been able to do it in four years with rusty iron, they ain't going to find it so easy this way, either." "I say, sergeant," called out a youngster in a comic tone, "what 'ave we done that they should treat us so cruel?"

Spa is a town of fine villas and finer hotels, big casinos and palatial bathing establishments. Before the war it was one of the gayest and most fashionable of European watering-places; recently it was the German G.H.Q., and at present the Armistice Commission is in session there.

The German delegates, who are lodged in a large hotel, gathered at the doors and windows

at the sound of our band. I have never seen a more depressed looking lot. One officer had a beard like a goat and was much annoyed because the soldiers cried "Baa," as they went past him. Our men indulged in various facetious remarks, such as: "Cheer up, Jerry, old boy, ain't you 'eard the war's over?" Which must have been most galling to the Prussian pride.

An armed German guard with his rifle at the sling was loafing about outside the hotel, presumably to protect the delegates from the inhabitants.

The situation of Spa is magnificent, lying as it does in a fair valley with hills and pine woods surrounding it, but structurally it is hideous, with its tawdry villas and flashy hotels. The large Casino was burnt down during a ball given by German officers, but otherwise the town does not seem to have suffered.

Beyond Spa, the road climbed steadily for over six kilometres and the men began to show signs of extreme exhaustion. Several fell in the ranks, others staggered to the roadside and collapsed in the ditch, too exhausted even to remove their packs. Nevertheless the spirit of the soldiers remained undaunted; the more tired they were, the more cheerful they became, and many a man actually fell with a jest or the snatch of a song on his lips. There was only one horse ambulance to carry stragglers, so that most of the poor fellows

had to be left lying by the roadside in the pouring rain. The long, black, unshapely column wound up the hill enveloped in grey rain clouds; gradually its pace grew slower and slower; it began to waver and spread across the road. It looked as though the battalion would break up, when the Colonel rode up to the band and urged them to make a supreme effort to play a march. At first they could not be induced to play, but after a few cheering words they shouldered their instruments, and there broke out, faint and tremulous, that most wonderful of marches, "The long, long trail," which just carried us up the last kilometre to the top of the hill. Then a brisk two kilometres down an easy slope, and a cheer announcing that the quartermaster-sergeants who arrange the billeting had been sighted at the entrance to the village of Francorchamps.

We are billeted in a comfortable house belonging to a widow with six charming and well educated daughters. Nothing could have been kinder than our reception, which did much to compensate us for the fatigues of the march. They gave us coffee to drink, and set us in front of a warm fire to dry our clothes and rest, while the servants were preparing a meal. As we had breakfasted at 6.30 a.m., $11\frac{3}{4}$ hours before, and had had nothing since, we did full justice to this when it was ready.

13th December.

To-day, the 13th of December, at 11.50 a.m., we crossed a bridge over a foaming stream about two miles from Francorchamps and found ourselves in Germany.

As the head of each company reached the bridge the men raised a cheer and made various humorous remarks :

" Is this Germany, Bill ? " " Yus, can't yer see the difference."

We had a short march to Malmedy—not more than 10 kilometres—through beautiful scenery and I need hardly add that it was raining hard. At the sound of our band the people in the roadside farms and villages turned out to see us pass, some scowling, others looking as if they would like to smile, and others openly friendly.

Malmedy is a nice little town of some 4,000 inhabitants, lying in a broad valley with rocky heights on the one hand and cultivated hills on the other. The attitude of the people is by no means unfriendly. Our mess is in a schoolmaster's house, a real square-headed Boche who, none the less, has done everything in his power to make us comfortable. His daughter, a horrible girl of some eighteen summers, is very anxious to establish friendly relations with the officers, and loses no opportunity of coming into our mess. She has put on her best clothes and is very offended because we take no notice of her whatever.

I am sharing a large room at the customs house with B. Here, also, the people are ready to oblige us in every way. They have lighted a fire in our room, supplied us with a lamp, heated water so that we can wash, and generally done their best to make us comfortable.

When I came back from the mess after dinner the chief customs officer invited me into his study to have a talk with his wife and son, the latter a recently demobilized soldier. They are natives of Hanover and belong to the Prussian Bureaucracy, but had a lot to say against the Prussian system which enforces discipline by fear. They expressed themselves as much impressed by the good behaviour and discipline of our soldiers, and the friendly spirit which prevails between officers and men. They are apprehensive about the future of Germany and think that Malmedy will probably go to Belgium.

The men are billeted in a large photographic paper factory, one of the best planned and organized institutions I have seen. The proprietor, who claims to be a Swiss and professes friendly sentiments, is arranging to supply hot water so that they can have a bath in the chemical mixing vats to-morrow. They need it, for they have not had a wash for a month and many are verminous.

The inhabitants of Malmedy are really Walloons. They talk three languages, German, French and Walloon, and many of

them obviously do not care a jot about the German Empire.

14th December.

We had been told that we were to rest for two days at Malmedy and I had retired to bed in that belief, but at 1 a.m. came orders that we were to march on to Lager Elsenborn at 11.30 a.m. The men were very disappointed for nothing annoys them more than to find promises broken.

We did not reach our destination until 4 p.m., after a very trying march of 18 kilometres in heavy rain, uphill nearly all the way over roads that were several inches deep in mud. The men, who were tired when we started, were dead beat at the end of the day; I felt this march more than any of the others, and more than once was on the point of falling down from exhaustion.

Elsenborn camp, which was a great German training centre, lies about 1,500 feet high on barren heath land. As we climbed the last long hill night was falling and rain clouds, driving across the heath, gave to the landscape an appearance of sadness and desolation.

We found the camp dirty and disorganized. The men were accommodated in wooden huts with wire beds and were not too badly off, save that the march had been so long that most of the soup had boiled away on the cookers, and they only got about a dixie lid full in consequence. No arrangements had

been made for the officers. The rooms allotted to us were already occupied by officers of the R.A.F., and it was only by a mutual arrangement we managed to secure beds. By breaking up furniture with old German bayonets, we managed to light a stove in one of the bedrooms, boil some water and make tea.

In the meantime, the company commander discovered, about a kilometre away, a large officers' mess (Casino) with a splendid kitchen, to which we sent our mess cook and waiter, and by 9 p.m. they had prepared a meal for us.

It was at Elsenborn that some of Germany's best divisions were concentrated in July, 1914, for the invasion of Belgium, and nothing has brought home to me more forcibly the sense of victory than dinner in this "casino" which, until a few days ago, was the mess of some crack German regiments. We ate off plates and drank out of glasses stamped with the crest of a Prussian cavalry regiment. In an adjoining room half a dozen youngsters of the R.A.F. were grouped around a piano, filling these halls, which had so lately re-echoed with "Deutschland über alles" and the "Wacht am Rhein," with the chorus of the latest London music-hall song. Best of all, we were drinking sparkling Moselle left behind by our enemy, and sold to us at 12 marks a bottle, by a barman who had lived 26 years in Manchester and was married to an English wife. He was a waiter, had been interned at the beginning of the War and sent back to Germany

in 1916. He seemed very unhappy, cursed the war, the Kaiser and everything German, and said his one wish was to get back to England. He told us that most of the German troops passed through Elsenborn Camp in good order, but that on the day after revolution had broken out in Berlin the general in command was deposed by the troops, and a corporal elected in his place.

15th December.

To Mützenich to-day 18 kilometres distant. I was detailed to go on ahead on a bicycle with the billeting party to act as interpreter. Now an Army bicycle weighs 72 lbs., and this one was rusty to boot, the roads were inches deep in mud and water and full of holes, the country hilly, so that it is not altogether surprising that after three miles I fell off in a state of exhaustion. Fortunately, S., the quartermaster, came along in a lorry soon afterwards and gave me a lift.

Nothing could exceed the beauty of the scenery. From the desolate plateau of Elsenborn the road winds for miles down the side of a deep glen with towering crags and forests of spruce on either hand, and a mountain torrent pouring in cascades over a rocky bed down the centre. At the foot of the glen is Montjoie, a lovely old wooden town ; its tall gabled houses almost meeting above a single narrow street. Beyond Montjoie there is a stiff climb of two kilometres to Mützenich, a mountain village straggling over a length of two or three kilo-

metres, which made billeting hard work. Fortunately billeting is much easier now that we are in order-loving Germany, because in each village the "Burgomeister" has carefully prepared lists showing the exact accommodation in each house.

The inhabitants appear by no means unfriendly, and, like the chief customs officer at Malmedy, our host, a builder by trade, had a lot to say against the Prussian military system. He told me that he was much impressed by the good behaviour and discipline of the British troops, whose conduct was better than that of the retreating Germans, the latter having done a good deal of stealing on their way through.

He is a big man, and in England would be considered very fat, but he assured me that he had suffered terribly from lack of food. Pulling out the top of his trousers to about two feet from his still monstrous belly, he was able to convince me that he was certainly much reduced in circumference.

16th December.

At Rötgen, whither we marched to-day, our reception was surprisingly good, and when the people heard that I could speak German they manifested the most friendly sentiments. They are large, handsome—quite the reverse of the generally accepted idea of a German—and their picturesque, half timbered houses are clean and airy.

Our mess is in the house of a joiner who, in addition, owns two or three acres of land, so that he and his family want for little in the way of food. The same is true of most of the inhabitants of Rötgen, where the croft system appears to prevail. The joiner has three grown-up daughters who are for ever popping in and out of the room which we use as a mess and trying to enter into conversation. They appear to be totally lacking in modesty, and it was only by rudeness that we could repel their advances.

They are more successful with the men. This evening, when I passed through the kitchen, the mother was showing to our mess cook the picture of her soldier son's grave in the cemetery at Henin Liétard, and explaining that he was killed in the Loretto heights in 1916. One of her daughters was washing and binding up an orderly's wounded foot, and the two others were sitting on the stairs with a soldier, who was writing some nonsense in their scrap book.

Every one is full of praise for the conduct of the British troops. The schoolmaster told me that the German soldiers who retreated through the village said to the inhabitants that they need fear nothing if they got an English garrison, because the English soldiers were "good fellows." A woman in a shop in which I was buying emery paper this evening said to me before half a dozen German customers: "How nice it is to meet an English-

man who speaks German. We should so like to be able to talk to your soldiers, they are such good, gentle fellows and better behaved than most of the Germans who came through here." Most of the simple people I have talked with profess hatred of the Prussian Government which they accuse of having ruined their country. I cannot understand their friendly bearing which, I think, must be attributed to one of three causes. Either the Rheinländer are not real Germans, feel little, if any, attachment to the Prussian system and are decent people at heart; or having been beaten they are anxious to placate their conquerors, as is the way with bullies all the world over; or they are friendly because, as Macchiavelli says in the *Princè*: "Men, when they receive good from him of whom they were expecting evil, are bound more closely to their benefactor."

18th December.

Yesterday and to-day we rested at Rötgen.

I think that Germany has a good many troubles ahead of her. Most of the people support the majority Socialists, but there is danger of the small Spartacist minority securing power by force of arms. There is a serious shortage of food and a still more serious shortage of certain raw materials. If we are to prevent disorder, we shall have to supply Germany with both; for, where there is hunger and unemployment, there is always abundance of men who are ready to listen to desperate

counsels. Let us punish the Kaiser, his ministers and their military chiefs, however great they may be, for they were responsible for the war and the manner in which it was carried on. We cannot punish a nation of 70,000,000 souls in the way in which they deserve to be punished, without entraining disorders, which in the end would cause us as much harm as to our enemy.

I am surprised that our Prime Minister should say that the immediate abolition of conscription will be insisted on at the forthcoming Peace Conference. How can the continental powers abolish conscription when half Europe is in the melting pot? Russia, Austria Hungary, Poland and the Balkans are in a state of chaos. At any moment the blaze may spread to Germany. Suppose France was suddenly to reduce her army to a force of 50,000 volunteers—and I don't think she would get more, for in her fair and neglected fields there is abundance of work to be done—who is to guarantee that in a few years there might not arise in Russia a strong man who, after restoring order in his own country, would overrun Europe with a small and comparatively inexpensive army? The same is true of Germany, for where there is much misery there is little difficulty in raising armies.

B. and I are sharing a very comfortable room in a house belonging to a widow who has also placed a sitting-room at our disposal. She has washed my clothes, dried and ironed them,

and when she heard I was going to have a bath, offered to evacuate the kitchen so that I could have it in warmth before the fire.

19th December.

To-day at 8 a.m. the battalion left Rötgen and marched 15 kilometres to the villages of Strauch and Steckenborn in the hills. These villages are a good deal poorer than Rötgen, but here also the croft system appears to prevail, so that the people do not want for the necessities of life. Their pretty half-timbered houses are clean enough, but as there is nearly always a cow-shed opening out of the kitchen they stink horribly. Most of the people here seem friendly, but the owners of the inn where we have our mess are most unpleasant people and, although they fawn upon us officers, do everything in their power to make our servants uncomfortable. The son, a demobilized soldier, was kicking a horse in a most brutal manner this evening.

In B.'s billet, the people are just the reverse. They have given up their best room for the dear old professor to sit in, and prepared some good vegetable soup for the three men who are also billeted on them. The peasant's wife went out and about the village to collect 12 eggs for me, with the best will in the world. As our rations have been very bad of late and I was anxious to get hold of a chicken, I asked her in my best German, if she could get me a "Hühnchen"—which means a young

chicken. She thought I said "Hündchen"—which means a little dog—and said she would guide me to the house where there was one for sale. Being busy, I got B. to go with her, and after a kilometre's walk, he found himself offered a beastly-smelling dachshund, for which the owner wanted 20 marks. Not understanding a word of German, B. was unable to explain what he really wanted, though he flapped his arms to imitate wings and made a noise resembling a chicken laying an egg.

He returned very cross, thinking himself the victim of a practical joke on my part. When the woman understood that it was a chicken we wanted she laughed for nearly ten minutes; but afterwards produced three, which we ate at dinner.

To-day has been very cold with masses of dark, slate-coloured clouds driving across the darker hills with, from time to time, a shower of hail or snow. To-night the heavens look more than ever threatening, and the clouds, sweeping past in majestic masses, are fearful in their suggestion of force. If it snows to-night it will go hard with us in the passes.

21st December.

Contrary to expectation, we remained at Steckenborn yesterday and marched to-day 20 kilometres to Vlatten, which lies on the edge of the valley of the Rhine. I had to go on with a billeting party at 6.30 a.m., and as our rations for consumption to-day—which should have

come last night—did not arrive until 7 a.m., we had to start on more or less empty stomachs.

It was twilight; a thin covering of snow lay on the fields and a bleak east wind cut us to the bone. We splashed along a leaden road, on our left a forest of fir and on our right a deep valley filled with mist; ahead, a bar of pale light lying across the mountains. Gradually hills began to appear in the mist like islands floating in a fairy sea; the bar of light ahead broadened, and there stood revealed, in the shadowy depths upon our right, a circle of splendid mountains surrounding a flat valley, with a torrent winding across it. The light was faint and unearthly, and the drifting mist clothed the mountains in a garment of such mysterious grandeur that I seemed to be gazing at the very home of the ancient German gods.

From Schmidt the road wound in spirals down to picturesque Heimbach on the river Roer; then one more range of hills to cross and we were at Vlatten, with the mountains behind and the valley of the Rhine ahead.

The burgomaster knew his work well, and as there was plenty of room in the village, billeting was easy. He seemed quite a pleasant individual and we drank an excellent bottle of Rhine wine together. He was very sad because he had lost his only son at Langemarck in April, 1915. He also paid a tribute to the conduct of our troops, which he described as far better than that of the retreating German

army. This is the third independent witness who has come forward to tell me this. He also said that the Rhine Provinces would never again consent to be ruled by Prussia.

22nd December.

A pleasant ride of 20 kilometres to Erp. For the first time for 12 days the rain had stopped and the sun was shining in a clear sky, and for the first time since our march started, the road lay across a flat plain; though mountains be right pleasant in the summer-time, I am glad to have left them behind after nearly a month's marching in mid-winter. We passed through several fine villages and a pretty little walled town called Zülpich, which one enters by a gate under a mediaeval tower, and leaves by just such another. Erp is a large village in the centre of a very rich agricultural district, and to judge by the billets the inhabitants must be very prosperous. There seem to be more well-to-do persons in Germany than in England. The rich do not live so extravagantly, nor the poor so badly, but the mass of the people live better than the mass of our own people. Indeed it is rare to see a really poor family.

The natives hereabouts do not appear so friendly as those in the mountain villages. We are penetrating more into the heart of Germany, among a better educated class of persons, who feel the defeat more than simple peasants who care for little in this world

beyond their fields. On the whole I prefer that the inhabitants should be stand-offish, because I don't feel very well disposed towards them.

23rd December.

To-day, after a march of a round 200 miles, we reached our final destination, the little town of Brühl, lying a few miles south of Cologne. I rode on at 7 a.m. in the twilight. Ahead, on the Vorgebirge, were the lights of many factories, their smoking chimneys dimly visible against the sky-line. At Lechenich we left the country behind and entered a region of industry. At Liblar, a few kilometres farther on, the road began to climb into the Vorgebirge, a low range of hills running north and south, about ten miles west of the Rhine. Here are curious outcrops of coal-dust which must be very cheap to work, for the hills themselves are composed of it, and only a few feet of clay has to be cut through to reach the coal. This is scooped up by a sort of dredger, tipped into trucks passing on an endless chain and tipped again at an adjacent factory, where it is converted into briquettes. There are a good many well-built factories in this part of the country and they are able to rely on a cheap supply of this sort of fuel.

Brühl is a pleasant, clean and prosperous little town, the central point of all the townlets and villages situated within a radius of 5 miles or so. Any place outside this radius comes in the orbit of Cologne or Bonn.

Billeting for the men was very simple, because they are all lodged in a large seminary for priests ; an ideal billet, well-heated, with a bed or mattress for every man, electric light, baths and a good kitchen.

Arranging quarters for the officers was far more difficult, as we are billeted on well-to-do people of the middle-class in widely scattered parts of the town. I had to visit each house in turn, and in nearly every one the people protested that they had not got room, inventing the most plausible pretexts. There was nothing for it but to find out how many people were living in each house, inspect every room, and give orders as to which were to be allotted for the use of officers. I began to get very angry towards the end, and threatened to have several householders arrested unless they had a good room ready for the use of an officer by 3 p.m. I pointed out to these good people that we had captured German orders, saying that no consideration was to be shown to the civilian inhabitants of France or Belgium, who must sleep on the bare floor, if their beds and mattresses were required by the troops. I must say that my attempts at " frightfulness " were ably seconded by the German policeman who accompanied me. These German policemen are only too willing to browbeat the civilian population, who go in great fear of them.

As a result of all this delay, I did not finish billeting until 3 p.m. and, as the troops got in

at 2, the officers had to wait about for an hour, which did not improve their tempers.

I was feeling done up and feverish by the time I had got everyone settled, so I paid a visit to the doctor who, finding I had a temperature of 103°, sent me off to bed. I feel pretty ill this evening, and fear that, like Moses, I shall not see the promised land, for they will probably evacuate me to hospital to-morrow, and the Rhine is several miles distant.

24th December.

My temperature had fallen to 97° this morning, so I shall escape evacuation after all, but the doctor has told me to remain in bed for a day or two. Fortunately I have a comfortable billet in a nice old eighteenth-century house situated in the market square. My bedroom is large, airy, and well-furnished, has electric light and hot and cold water. Next to it is a sitting-room, which Herr Guer has placed at our disposal, and beyond that, again, is another bedroom where B. sleeps. I stayed in bed until the evening when, owing to the difficulty of getting any food, I was obliged to get up and go across to the mess, where, about 9 p.m., I managed to obtain some soup and tinned sausages. The Christmas allotment of whisky had arrived—eight bottles for seven of us—and three officers were already in a speechless state. After dinner they were to visit other messes in order to

continue their orgy and were planning how, on the morrow, they would spend their time drinking. It is very degrading, but the poor fellows are more to be pitied than blamed. Many of them are very young and to escape from the strain of war, which has been so often intolerable, have had recourse to the whisky bottle. In only too many cases drinking has become a habit which they cannot break themselves of now.

Christmas Day.

At 10.15 a.m. the battalion marched through the market-place on its way to service in a large hall close by. Crowds had gathered in the street to see it pass, and one heard many exclamations of admiration at the discipline and appearance of our troops. How wonderful it is to be spending Christmas Day in Germany. I went to Communion Service at 11 a.m., and thereafter remained quietly in my billet until 8 p.m., when the officers of the battalion assembled in the Rathaus Keller to eat their Christmas dinner. We had a most excellent meal, washed down with sparkling Moselle, and, before we broke up, the Germans living in the neighbouring houses heard for the first time in their lives forty lusty British voices bellowing "Auld Lang Syne."

29th December.

I am confined to my bed again with another attack of fever. This evening, Herr Guer came

into my room in a state of considerable excitement with the evening edition of the *Cologne Gazette* in his hand: "What do you think?" he exclaimed in German. "That man of wrath, Lloyd George, has got a majority of over 300 in your elections. What will happen to poor Germany. O what will happen to Germany?"

I could hardly restrain my laughter, although feeling very seedy; these Germans have such an obtuse way of blurting out their innermost thoughts before their enemies. He had previously told me, in the course of a long conversation, that he was counting on the victory of labour and the Asquithian Liberals at the coming elections. Indeed, the course of our elections was watched with much keener interest in Germany than in England, and the victory of the Coalition was a source of bitter disappointment to our enemies.

I have heard unofficially from the commanding officer that I am to be made civil staff captain of the 71st Infantry Brigade sub-area.

2nd January.

Yesterday I came to Brigade H.Q. to act as civil staff captain, which means that I have to deal with questions concerning the civil population.

We are living at Eichholz, a very fine modern country house near the village of Keldenich, a few miles east of Brühl. The owner is a certain Herr von Joest, a rich landowner and sugar

manufacturer, and an erstwhile close friend of the Crown Prince. He is at present living at Eichholz with his wife and two daughters, who do not like being relegated to a remote corner of the house, while we occupy all the best rooms. As a result, Frau von Joest and her daughters do not even say good morning to us when we meet face to face. This is a subject for congratulation, since it would be very unpleasant to have to maintain any sort of relations with these people.

Herr von Joest was very indignant yesterday because with four guns we killed 52 head of his game, including 30 pheasants and about a dozen hares. He had the cheek to send a message to the General that he ought to pay for the game, so I was deputed to point out to him that the Germans had killed off nearly every head of game in Belgium and Northern France, without paying a single pfennig to their owners. Consequently we did not intend to pay for his game. Herr von Joest, who has travelled much and is rather less pig-headed than most Germans, had nothing more to say about compensation for the loss of his pheasants. Before we parted I effected the exchange of six bottles of his 1896 port for two tins of bully beef and a bar of Sunlight soap.

If the Joests are stand-offish, the very reverse is the case with their numerous maid-servants, who are aggressively friendly to our batmen and waiters. Happening to enter the kitchen last night, I found an impromptu ball

going on, for which the music was supplied by a gramophone. When in Germany before the war, I found the women very forward; hunger has not made them less so. The British soldiers are very popular with the people, and may be seen feeding ragged children with chocolate and biscuits, or carrying heavy baskets to market for the women, despite the ferocious order that any man found walking with a woman is to be placed under close arrest. It is extraordinary to think that collectively our men have been fighting for $4\frac{1}{2}$ years against a people for whom, when they meet them individually, they have no enmity at all.

3rd January, 1919.

To Cologne to-day by motor ambulance with the General, who has to visit a dentist at one of the Casualty Clearing Stations. While he was thus engaged, I called on the *Landrat* to obtain certain information about my district. He received me with the elaborate and ceremonious politeness customary among German officials, when they are dealing with some one more powerful than themselves. He talked about the Bolshevik outbreaks in Berlin and the prospects of a stable Government being established in Germany. He said that before the arrival of the British Army in Cologne all power had been usurped by a Council of Workmen and Soldiers, whose representative used to sit in a chair opposite to him and give him

orders, blowing cheap cigar smoke into his face the while. "I was thankful when the British came," he added, "and could have danced for joy when your General told me that he would not recognize any Councils of Workmen and Soldiers."

The moneyed and official classes in the Rhineland are divided between chagrin at being defeated and relief at being freed from the perils of Bolshevism by the presence of British troops. It would be a relief to them if we were to occupy the whole of Germany, until such time as the National Assembly shall have established a stable Government, and all fear of Bolshevism is removed.

For the rest, they cannot be induced to admit that Germany was responsible for the war, which they attribute variously to Russia or even Austria; they would like to add England, but dare not do so in front of us. They do not realize, or will not realize, that their armies were on the point of meeting with complete disaster, preferring to believe that they were defeated by the British blockade. Certainly our blockade has reduced Germany to the extremities of want. The working classes in Cologne show plainly the results of the underfeeding which they have endured for two years and more, and only the efficiency of their food distribution has avoided actual famine. The women and children are pale and unhealthy; indeed I think it is no exaggeration to say that the people of Cologne are only

about half as fat as they were before the war. Many of the rich have been able to procure extras for themselves by paying fancy prices, but the spirit of the working classes has been broken by suffering, and they have the appearance of being but half-awakened from a terrible dream.

For this reason I do not believe there is likely to be serious disorder in Germany. Sporadic outbreaks there may be, because there are always to be found enthusiasts who will resort to arms whatever their physical condition, but the mass of the German people only want to be able to resume their normal occupations and to get enough to eat. Hunger alone will bring about Bolshevism in this order-loving land, and to scotch this bogey we shall have to let Germany have both food and raw material.

The moneyed and official classes are still attached to the person of the Kaiser, whom they describe as having been badly advised. The people profess to have no use for their old Government, but force of habit tells for so much in Germany that were he suddenly to reappear among them they would probably yield him unquestioning obedience.

When we first entered Germany, an order was issued that all male civilians were to raise their hats to officers in the streets, but this became an awful nuisance, as the officers were supposed to answer their salutes. Now male civilians must raise their hats if addressed by,

or addressing an officer, and must stand uncovered during the playing of the National Anthem.

All officials in uniform must salute British officers at all times. The police still wear their old uniforms and retain their swords, but not revolvers; the railway and tramway servants, being employés of the State, also wear gorgeous uniforms. There are, in addition, a host of other uniformed officials—for the German loves a uniform—all of whom salute us with an air of obsequious pleasure. I am convinced that the short interregnum between the passing of Kaiserdom and our arrival, when they had no one to salute, was the most miserable period of their lives.

The demobilized soldiers still wear their field-grey uniforms, minus buttons and badges, but have discarded their military caps for some form or other of civilian headwear, not infrequently a bowler hat.

The uniformed German officer has completely disappeared from the streets and given place to a host of English, Scotch, Canadian, and New Zealand officers. They may not be so smart as the Prussian in his tight-fitting grey overcoat and many-coloured uniform, but their frank healthy faces are certainly much more pleasing to the eye than those scowling and arrogant Teutons who used to lord it in street and café. The people have grown accustomed to the change, and even a kilt and glengarry no longer arouse curiosity.

Many parts of the German officer's uniform and equipment have found their way into the shops of second-hand clothes and curiosity dealers, where British and Colonial officers and men may be seen bargaining for them. Even officers of the proud Guard Cuirassier Regiment have been selling their splendid cuirasses and eagle-crested helmets, which can be had for 350 marks the set; by no means expensive when one considers that helmet and cuirass are silver-plated and the mark is only worth 6½d. The helmets of other regiments are to be had at more moderate prices—an ordinary *Pickelhaube* fetching about 10 marks. The market price of a new iron cross of the official pattern is 10 marks. Iron crosses actually worn by soldiers fetch 20 marks; the Turkish Order of the Crescent is going for 15 marks. Relics of the old order are at a discount in Germany to-day.

Cologne is a fine city with about 650,000 inhabitants. The narrow streets are lined with many fine buildings and shops, the latter now filled almost entirely with articles of luxury. There is no food to be bought, save a few rich looking cakes which are made of some noxious substitutes, and a certain amount of fresh vegetables; but never a potato. I had what tasted like a very good cup of chocolate in a café, but I think it must have been "ersatz" chocolate, for I felt very sick after drinking it.

The principal thoroughfare is the Höhe-

strasse, which is the Bond Street of Cologne, containing all the best shops. After dark it is brightly illuminated and filled with a mass of humanity, leisurely strolling up and down and looking at the shops, each other, and the British officers and men, who are also there in great numbers. It is a typical German custom to stroll in the streets after business hours, and as the Höhestrasse is the narrowest street in the city, and every one who has a decent suit or dress appears to congregate there, the crowd practically puts an end to all wheeled traffic.

The pride of Cologne is its Cathedral, not that there is any reason to be proud of this ungainly building. The German loves anything that is enormous, and the Cathedral is certainly that. There is nothing spontaneous about its composition; the architect obviously having set out to build a Gothic cathedral without having any of that inspiration which made French and British Gothic so wonderful. The interior of the Cathedral is much more pleasing than the exterior.

Just behind the Cathedral is the Rhine, spanned by the Hohenzollern Bridge, a fine piece of modern engineering. The river is about 400 yards broad and flows swiftly; owing to the heavy rains it is unusually full, the water being practically on a level with the embankment.

I have been much impressed by the new appearance of Cologne and other German

cities which I have visited both now and before the war. The Germans appear to have entirely rebuilt their towns during the last 40 years or so, with the result that the slum has been eliminated and the bulk of the inhabitants live in commodious, airy homes. No expense has been spared in the erection of public buildings, such as hospitals, schools, municipal offices, railway stations and the like, and, though the architecture may be heavy, it does not compare unfavourably with most of the buildings that have been put up in other countries during the same period.

German factories have also a clean, well-planned, new and commodious appearance, which is too often lacking in our own, and whatever we may say of Teutonic manners and customs, we must admit that they have builded well. Far more use is made of electricity than with us; the most remote villages being supplied with light and power, by means of high tension electric wires carried on steel, or concrete pillars throughout the length and breadth of the land. The same is true of Belgium and Northern France.

8th January.

To Bonn this afternoon. A well-built, pleasantly-situated city of modern aspect. The view from the terraces overlooking the Rhine towards the Seven Mountains is most pleasant.

Bonn possesses a very fine Romanesque

Cathedral or Minster, but the University, which is the old Kurfurstal Palace, is a dull looking building faced with plaster.

As we approached the University we heard a cheer deepening into a loud roar. The passing Germans turned pale at hearing this strange sound, and we hastened on to see what was the cause of the commotion. We turned the corner and saw in the square before the University two British regiments playing each other at football while two or three thousand men stood round cheering their respective sides.

In the square is a large equestrian statue of the Emperor Frederick, and some one—generally reputed to be a New Zealander—has hacked off the nose of the founder of the German Empire.

I got back to Eichholz at 5 p.m., to hear the welcome news that I was to go on leave by the Cologne-Boulogne express leaving at 4.20 a.m. to-morrow.

12th January.

I boarded the Cologne-Boulogne express at midnight on the 8th, but the train did not actually start until 4.20 a.m. on the 9th. The so-called express is an old hospital train, and each officer travelling by it has a bunk, which bunks are arranged in three tiers, 36 to a coach. The first night was not unpleasant, for there were not more than a dozen in one coach, but the following day and evening the train filled

up completely at Namur, Charleroi, and Mons, after which the atmosphere became oppressive with smoke mingled with the fumes of beer and whisky. The journey should have taken 26 hours, but actually lasted 52, there being a halt of no less than 12 hours just beyond Mons. The railways are still in a very bad state where they were destroyed by the Germans, and in places the rails are about as straight as a pig's tail. Fortunately, we were able to obtain tea, coffee, bread and butter, jam and sandwiches on the train.

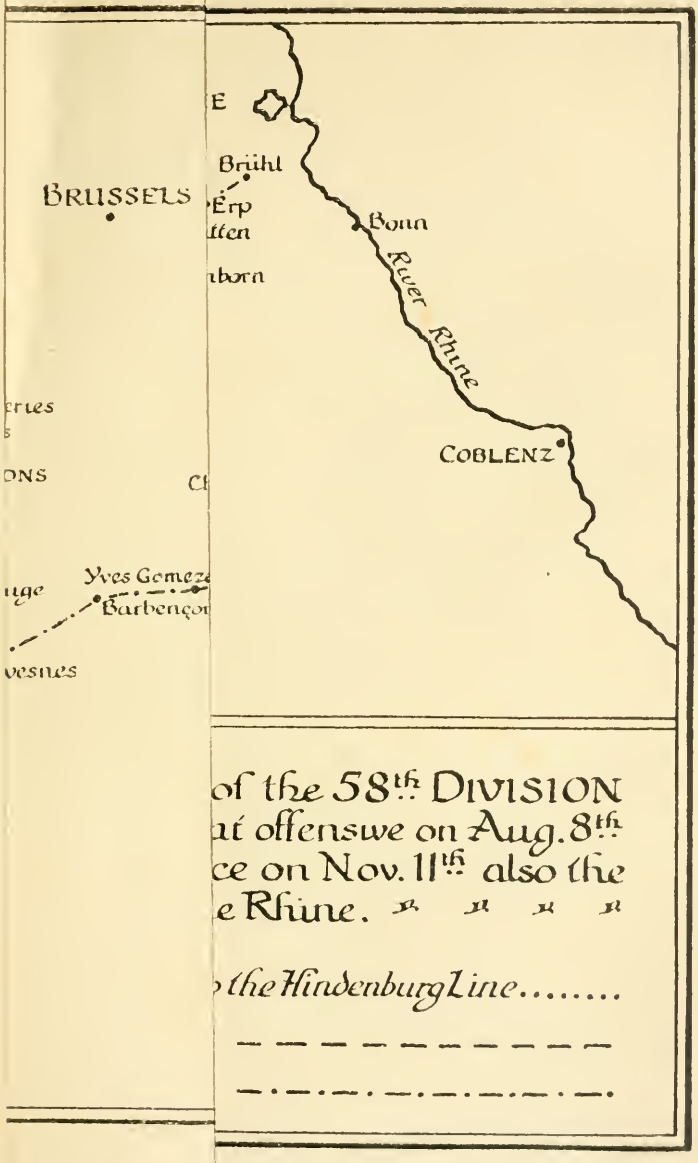
There being nothing to do and little room in which to move about, most of us spent our time lying on our backs reading and sleeping, getting up from time to time to eat some light refreshments, and then promptly lying down again. There were a good many New Zealand officers aboard and as usual they were full of spirits, good nature and ready wit.

When our train was halted opposite an Australian troop train near Mons, a big Australian soldier climbed on to the footboard and put his head in through the window of our compartment. After surveying the officers—among whom were several colonels and a general—cigarette in mouth, he remarked: "Say, diggers! Got any booze on board?"

We reached Boulogne at 4.30 a.m. on the 11th, but I could not cross until the afternoon boat, and then only by volunteering to act as adjutant on board a ship going to Dover, because my leave warrant was dated for me to cross on

the 12th. The sea was rough, even the boat deck being washed with spray, but what recked we who were approaching England, with those four long fateful years behind us and a world of possibilities ahead.

THE END.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Barbençon
of the 58th DIVISION
at offenswe on Aug. 8th
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the Hindenburg Line.....

Map to illustrate the operations of the 58th DIVISION between the beginning of the great offensive on Aug. 8th and the signing of the Armistice on Nov. 11th also the march of the 6th DIVISION to the Rhine.

The advance from in front of Amiens to the Hindenburg Line.....

The advance from Lens into Belgium – – – – – – – – – –

The march to the Rhine –.–.–.–.–.–.–